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ABSTRACT

The values of private association and self-help through individual effort have been a compelling aspect of the American philosophy. Reaffirming Americanism was not the only reason that immigrant or minority groups created mutual aid or self-help societies, however, since immediate economic and social goals were significant motivations for such associations. Because studying self-help and mutual assistance groups can aid the understanding of minorities in this country, this project was undertaken with the goal of developing materials for classroom use in high school history classes. The story of Victoria Earle Matthews, a founding member of the National Conference of Colored Women in 1895 and supporter of residences for urban black women, illustrates the importance of self-help for minority groups. The Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York is another example of a self-help group at work. A historical overview of black independent schools also explores the role of mutual aid associations. Each of these essays contains a bibliography, but a general bibliography is included in Part 2 of the report, which contains classroom materials and assignments on mutual aid associations. (SLD)

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MUTUAL AID AND SELF-HELP GROUPS IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES: A PRELIMINARY ESSAY ON THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR HIGH SCHOOL UNITED STATES HISTORY CLASSES ACCOMPANIED BY CLASSROOM MATERIALS AND LESSON PLANS

Submitted for

TA5587 Klingenstein Seminar

Klingenstein Project

Professor Pearl Kane

By

Steve Kramer

May 12, 1995

PART I

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Rationale For This Study

When Alexis de Tocqueville travelled through the United States in 1831-1832, observing the customs and practices of the young republic, he noted, as he wrote in his superlative account of his journey, Democracy in America, that

> Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to sent missionaries to the antipodes; in this manner they found hospitals, prisons, and schools. If it is proposed to inculcate some truth or to foster some feeling by encouragement of a great example, they form a society.

The famous tourist compared the United States favorably with Europe in this regard. Europeans, he observed, rely on the government to achieve what "enfeebled and incompetent" individuals "can no longer accomplish." More significantly de Tocqueville warned that this reliance on government would be deleterious to the young democracy. "No sooner does a government attempt to go beyond its political sphere and to enter upon this new track than it exercises, even unintentionally, an insupportable tyranny. . . ." He concluded that government ought not to be the "only active powers"; in democratic countries, associations should play a major role in the lives of the citizens. Before he arrived in America, he considered the stories that 100,000 American men had promised to "abstain from spiritous liquors" more a "joke than a serious engagement," but he realized after his travels that the actions were perfectly logical for members of a democratic society who wished neither to contribute to an expansion of government power nor permit the continued "progress of drunkenness around them. . . ." The perceptive author concluded that [n]othing .

. . is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America . . . [since] we understand them imperfectly because we have hardly ever seen anything of the kind." [1]

De Tocqueville also recognized that Americans believed that labor was "the necessary, natural, and honest condition of human existence." Americans honored labor "when it is undertaken at the bidding of ambition or virtue."[2] American history is replete with the powerful image of honest labor. Thomas Jefferson apotheosized the yeoman farmer as the American ideal. Abraham Lincoln, a corporate lawyer, is considered the epitome of the self-made man in America. Andrew Carnegie's story of rising from poverty-stricken immigrant to one of the wealthiest men in American history is standard fare in United States history textbooks. Booker T. Washington is but one of many African-American leaders who preached the virtues of labor and self-help as leading to the good life. The employment bureau of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York declared in its annual report for 1897 that "[r]elieving boys and young men by securing them positions [jobs] is beyond doubt, one of the highest orders of charity, most effective in its good results and lasting in its influence."[3] The successful political campaigns of the Republican party in the 1994 fall elections brought to power a group of politicians whose rhetoric was brimming with references to the dignity of labor and the importance of personal responsibility.

The importance of these values of private association and self-help through individual effort are clearly a compelling aspect of the American ethos. As a teacher of high school United States history, I always had some interest in

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York: The Modern Library, 1981), 403, 405, 407, 408.

[2] *Ibid.*, 445.

[3] Twenty-Fourth Year: Annual Report of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York With Membership Roll (New York, 1897), 26.

these tenets of the American faith. The yeoman farmer of Jefferson, the Horatio Alger stories, the Social Gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the settlement house crusade of Jane Addams have been staples of my United States history courses. However, a confluence of incidents and events, beginning in the late 1980's, impelled me to move beyond the valuable standards above and toward what eventually became my Klingenstein project as well as a passion.

In 1989 I was fortunate to be selected to attend a month-long seminar at Princeton under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Readers Digest Foundation. At the conclusion of that summer institute which emphasized the incorporation of African-American, women's, immigrant, and working class history into traditional United States history survey courses, I was one of four participants selected to a team that would travel in the summers presenting one-week distillations of what our group had learned at Princeton. The next summer, in our one-week institute for high school history teachers in Boston, one of the participants made a telling observation. He asserted that African-American history taught in the survey courses focused on slavery and civil rights as if black people had no other past but oppression and challenging discrimination. His statement made me reevaluate my own teaching in this regard, but it was only one of several incidents to move me toward a review of my course.

An article, by Anne Firor Scott, given to me by a colleague, contrasted the virulent antiblack attitudes of late nineteenth century whites with the extensive self-help and mutual aid activities of African-American women throughout American history. She quoted an eminent southern historian of the late nineteenth century: "The average [black] father and mother are morally obtuse and indifferent, and at times even openly and reservedly licentious. . . . Chastity

is a virtue which the parents do not seem anxious to foster and guard in their daughter. . . ." Scott presented another characterization from a southern white woman in the early twentieth century: "I cannot imagine such a creation as a virtuous black woman." Scott more than amply demonstrated that African-American women even before these comments were made were engaged in a variety of undertakings to uplift themselves and members of their race. Even before the Thirteenth Amendment, "black women had begun, with whatever meager resources they could gather, to create, first, welfare organizations and, then, schools, health centers, orphanages, and many other institutions." By 1910, Scott concludes that, "in proportion to population, black women had developed at least as many, possibly more, voluntary associations than had their white counterparts." This was "a world that was often as invisible to their white neighbors as it has been to white historians ever since."[4] Such ethnic misconceptions were furthered in popular works such as Lothrop Stoddard's Reforging America: The Story of Our Nationhood and Madison Grant's The Passing of a Great Race: Stoddard wrote that the United States "should absolutely refuse to spread through the blood of the nation [nonwhite] racial strains so different that they would undermine our ethnic foundations." For Stoddard the Chinese, Japanese, African, Mexican, and Jewish citizens of the United States constituted a dire threat to the nation's future.[5]

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[4] Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *The Journal of Southern History*, LVI (February, 1990), 5,10. Ironically, Scott's article was a response to a query after a speech she gave about women's voluntary organizations in which she hardly mentioned the extensive endeavors of black women in voluntary work. My thanks to Emily Warner of Durham, North Carolina, for bringing this article to my attention.

[5] Lothrop Stoddard, Reforging America: The Story of Our Nationhood (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 257. Stoddard wrote other works on similar topics: The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy and Racial Realities in Europe. Stoddard was a graduate of the nation's preeminent university, Harvard, which had

This blatant stereotyping excluded the very complex activities of these communities and distorted their beliefs and attitudes as they struggled in this country. It institutionalized a particular label as a descriptive device for ethnic and immigrant groups. Such stereotyping is not only historical. Although they postdate the inception of my Klingenstein project, the passage of Proposition 187 in California in the fall of 1994, the publication of Charles Murray's The Bell Curve, and the recent review of Peter Brimelow's Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster (New York: Random House, 1994) are poignant reminders of the lingering simplistic attitudes about ethnic communities. My limited examinations of these minority communities had convinced me that these communities had embodied the very values that de Tocqueville had ascribed so positively to Americans. Thus an extensive study of the institutions of mutual aid and self-help within these communities could contribute to a greater understanding of minority societies, and I believed should be an essential component in the teaching of high school United States history.[6]

Two comments also solidified my belief that the examination of mutual aid and self-help groups could be a significant addition to United States history courses. A former student asserted that any African-American history course needed to be academically rigorous. She believed this would justify the study of such groups in America and counter the impressions that such courses were 'gut' classes. A good friend complained that her African-American history course

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instituted its famous Jewish quotas in the 1920's. I was unable to find a copy of Grant's book which is one of the best-known expressions of the fears of white supremicists in the early years of the twentieth century.

[6] See review of Brimelow's book in *The New York Times Book Review*, April 16, 1995, 3. One of Mr. Brimelow's observations will suffice to denote the tenor of his work. Describing West Indians, he says, "It must be said that nowadays part of their enterprise goes into drug 'posses' and car theft rings." One could surmise from such reasoning that part of white "enterprise" is engaging in savings and loan scandals.

in high school had been more hagiography than an examination of the complexity of the community. She was pleased to have had the course, but she remembered thinking that no group of people could be as exemplary and irreproachable as her course had apparently suggested. These observations solidified my belief that a study of mutual aid and self-help groups within ethnic and religious communities would contribute significantly to a better understanding of these communities and their aspirations for living in America. The introduction of materials about mutual aid associations would add academic comlexity to the study of ethnic communities and indicate the divisions within communities when there was disagreement over the methods of self-help. The tensions between 'Uptown' and 'Downtown' Jews in New York City in the early twentieth century is only one example of this.[7]

When I conceived this project, I wanted it to be more practical than theoretical: the production of some usable classroom materials was a major goal. Yet a justification for using any such materials and what could be learned from them would have to precede the compilation of that information. In addition I wished to concentrate on the minority ethnic and religious communities in the United States. Focusing on African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic American, and Jewish American communities would allow me to show the extensive nature of such organizations within communities which had implicitly and explicitly been accused of being unAmerican. Ironically, the justification for studying such groups was expressed clearly in a volume that, as far as I could tell, had never been checked out from Butler library at Columbia Universiity; the librarian had to add a bar code and a 'date due' leaf.

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[7] See footnote 26.

In 1981 the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota published Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the United States: Essays and Inventories. Although the book focuses on the organizations that European immigrant groups including Croats, Czechs, Germans, Poles, Romanians, Slovaks, and Swedes created, the motivations for establishing such groups seemed similar for the immigrant groups in which I was interested. In an essay in Records, John Bodnar, an eminent immigration historian, writes that the Croatian Fraternal Union declared "the better side of it [sports] all rests in the fact that we as a people, a so-called foreign language group, stand to obtain much more recognition through the field of sports than in any other way."[8] This desire for respect and recognition was a factor among the minority groups I am examining. Speaking in 1911 in Laredo, Texas, to the Congreso Mexicanista which was planning to form a mutual benefit and protection society, the Reverend Pedro Grado declared that such an association would be "a powerful medium to carry complaints to the desks of officials and demonstrate by turns that we are not indolent, that we are concerned about the poverty of our countrymen, and that we are able to do all that is within the law for them."[9] The writer of the introduction to a remarkable work, The Jewish Communal Register, a volume over a thousand pages in length listing and describing the communal self-help organizations in the Jewish

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[8] John Bodnar, "Ehtnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: Their Historical Development, Character, and Significance," in Immigrant History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the United States: Essays and Inventories (St. Paul: Immigration History Research Center, 1981), 12.

[9] Quoted in David Weber, ed., Foreigners In Their Native Land: Hisotrical Roots of the Mexican Americans (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 250. For more on the Congreso Mexicanista, see Jose E. Limon, "El Primer Congreso Mexicanista de 1911: A Precursor to Contemporary Chicanismo," *Aztlan* (Spring and Fall 1974), vol. 5, 85-117. This is a brief history of the organization. In addition there is an appendix of contemporary speeches, in Spanish, from the convention.

communities throughout New York City and the United States in 1917-1918, states one of the purposes for compiling the information:

> It will add to the progress of the general community and of the country as a whole by furnishing the proper materials and the proper view-point for a true understanding of the efforts the Jews in the foremost city of America are making to contribute their share to the fulfillment of the best ideals of American life."[10]

The Hebrew Free Loan Society, an eminent institution of the Lower East Side which lent small amounts of money to struggling entrepreneurs and aspiring small business people, women and men, followed a strict policy of nonsectarianism in making its loans. As Jenna Weissman Joselit makes clear in her history of the organization, that policy reflected in the minds of the founders traditional Jewish belief and efforts to diminish the stereotypes of 'Shylock' Jews and to lessen anti-Semitism.[11] In the preface to his 1883 History of the Negro Race in America, "the first scholarly history of the Negro in the United States," George Washington Williams declared that among his purposes in writing the history were to challenge the standards by which African-Americans were judged. A history of blacks in North America "would give the world more correct ideas of the Colored people, and incite the latter to greater effort in the struggle of citizenship and manhood." He concluded the preface:

> I commit this work to the public, white and black, to the friends and foes of the negro, in hope that the obsolete antagonisms which grew out of the relation of master and slave may speedily sink as storms beneath the horizon; and that the day will hasten when there shall be no North, no South, no Black, no White,-- but all be American citizens, with equal duties and equal rights.

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[10] The Jewish Communal Register (New York: The Kehillah, 1918), vi.
[11] Joselit, Lending Dignity: The First One Hundred Years of the Hebrew Free Loan Society Of New York (New York: The Hebrew Free Loan Society of New York, 1992), 48-54.

Williams' preface is a reflection of the attitudes that guided African-American leaders such as Booker T. Washington and those who founded African-American societies.[12]

Reaffirming their Americanism was not the only reason that immigrant or minority groups created mutual aid or self-help societies. The essays in Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations cite other factors in the establishment of these organizations. Michael Karni argues that such societies were formed to provide some financial and social security against the instabilities of urban and industrial life in the years 1875-1925 prior to government insurance and corporate welfare capitalism. Orphanages, old-age homes, burial insurance associations, loan societies were frequently organizations developed by minority groups. Karni also argues, in an area that this project will not cover, that these benefit organizations were "prime examples of large-scale corporate immigrant capitalism. . . ." In his essay Bodnar notes that such groups probably had origins in the homeland of the immigrants, and my own preliminary investigations indicate that the *landsmanshaftn* of the European Jews drew on their Hebrew and European backgrounds and the Chinese *tongs*, now reviled for their gang activities, developed from familial and regional associations in China.[13] Bodnar

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[12] George Washington Williams, History of the Negro Race in America (New York: Arno Press, 1968 [1883]), vi, x. See also August Meier, Negro Thought In America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966), 42-58, 121-138, 256-279, for a more detailed and fascinating discussion of African-American thought and motivation in challenging stereotypes and discrimination. The quote on Williams' book is in Meier, 52.

[13] Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations, 3, 4, 5. See Michael R. Weisser, A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World (New York: Basic Books, 1985) for an informal history of the *landsmanshaftn*. For a superb account of mutual aid and self-help groups among Asian-Americans see Chapter 4, "The Social Organization of Asian Immigrant Communities," in Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991). This chapter is xeroxed in the

observes, though, that "nearly every immigrant group in America established some form of benefit society, a fact that suggests that American conditions nurtured such a response to a considerable extent."[14] A brief and informal history of African-American education that I wrote for a school shadowing project in Teachers College course TA 4070, 'Analysis of Private Schools,' and which is included as a chapter in this project, substantiates to some extent the observation that American conditions either "nurtured," or forced, the creation of mutual aid or sel-help organizations.

Economic factors certainly played a role in the formation of such groups. The previously mentioned Hebrew Free Loan Society provided small loans to borrowers who generally needed money for brief periods of time and had no recourse to large banking institutions and wanted to avoid the ubiquitous loan sharking operations.[15] The mutual benefit and relief fund for the United Order of True Reformers of the State of Virginia was to provide death benefits to its African-American members. Later the Order established a savings bank in the aftermath of the failure of the Reconstruction-era Freedmen's Bank and a racial incident in Virginia which led Order leaders to conclude "if the colored people had a bank of their own, where they might deposit their money and handle it, there would be no chance for the white people to find out what they were doing. . . ." The bank was a success. The Richmond *Times*, a white newspaper, of September 6, 1893, observed that the only bank "which honored all checks and did not stop paying full value in currency" during the financial crisis of 1893 was the "only colored banking institution in this city. . . . " Even the white school

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Class Materials and Assignments Section of this project.

[14] Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations, 6.

[15] See Joselit, Lending Dignity for a very succinct and insightful study of this institution which still exists today on East 42nd Street in New York City.

board went to the bank in order to pay its janitors in cash.[16] Nelson Pichardo noted that the Mexican-American community in California had a myriad of *mutualistas* and other voluntary associations, some with a heritage from the small Mexican towns from which the migrants had come, which provided death benefits and insurance for its members. He discusses briefly Cruz Azul, a women's group, whose purpose was to help the poor of the community.[17]

Yet Bodnar observes that economic needs were rarely the sole goal of such groups. "Economic benefits, in fact, were sometimes minimal." The teaching of Catholicism, "ethnic consciousness," cultural preservation, social events, and job procurement were a few of the activities that European associations promoted.[18] The societies of African, Jewish, Asian, and Hispanic Americans were little different. An African-American fraternal benefit society, the Supreme Grand Temple Grand United Order of Toussaint L'Ouverture, declared in its constitution and by-laws that, in addition to "the relief of our sick and the burying of our dead," the organization wanted "to establish a better understanding of character and brotherly love of Ethiopia," encourage an interest in the values of Toussaint L'Ouverture, undertake the "bringing about this organization for race-pride . . . throughout the world," and teach "how to become a free man, a citizen in every country. . . ."[19] Sucheng Chan in his

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[16] W. P. Burrell, Twenty-Five Years History of the Grand Fountain of the United Order of True Reformers, 1881-1905 (Richmond: Grand Fountain. United Order of True Reformers, 1909), 38-39, 95-96, 156.

[17] Nelson Pichardo, "The Establishment and Development of Chicano Voluntary Associations in California, 1910-1930, Aztlan, vol. 19 (Fall, 1988-1990), 93-155.

[18] Bodnar, 7.

[19] Constitution and General Laws of the Supreme Grand Temple Grand United Order of Toussaint L'Ouverture Samuel Unity . . . in the Mystic Rites and Brotherhood of Ethiopia, in America Friendly Society (New York: Harlem Printing Society, 1927), 8, 9, 39. This pamphlet is in the Schomburg Library. This is the only document I could find on this organization. The Grand Fountain of True Reformers, mentioned earlier, appears to have

history of Asian Americans declares that Chinese American associations frequently "maintained cemeteries, and shipped the exhumed bones of the deceased to their home villages for final burial." Sikhs in California with their society, the Khalsa Diwan, organized in 1912, had a place to read newspapers, gather for political discussions, and raise funds for the Indian independence movement.[20] The Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York ran an employment bureau from its inception in 1874 to 1934 when it merged with other Jewish employment bureaus.[21] Clearly fraternal organizations had functions beyond direct economic benefits.

Another benefit of these societies was the leadership opportunities for the minority groups. At varying times these groups were excluded from both the political and social processes in the United States. Bodnar argues that the leaders of many of these groups came from diverse backgrounds, working class as well as petite bourgeois.[22] Again this is manifest in the ethnic organizations with which this project is concerned. In 1892, eleven immigrants from Vilna, living on the Lower East Side, raised $95 among themselves to establish the Hebrew Free Loan Society.[23] Booker T. Washington, the acknowledged leader of black Americans with his position as the head of the Tuskegee Institute from the 1880's until his death in 1915, had been born a slave. Chan observes that Koreans in the United States in the early part of this century relied on Korean Christian ministers who were very politicized against the Japanese occupation of

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been more successful. There is another group that I learned about, the New York African Society for Mutual Relief which existed from 1808 to 1945, but I have not had time to pursue the sources about this since I learned of it about two weeks ago (April, 1995).

[20] Chan, Asian Americans, 64, 75.

[21] See chapter in this project on the YMHA employment bureau for more details. Today the YMHA of New York is better known as the 92nd Street "Y".

[22] Records, 8.

[23] Joselit, iii.

their homeland to be their leaders, their elite rather than merchants or farmers[24] (Churches and schools can be exemplars of self-help and mutual aid which is manifest in some of the documents and articles in the Assignments section of this project). Internal controversies about leadership (and other issues) often resulted when differences of opinion existed about the direction a community should head.[25] The feud between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois is well-known, but there were other African-American leaders of that era including Ida Wells-Barnett and Bishop Henry Turner who had differences of opinion about both Washington and DuBois.[26] The conflict between the 'Uptown' German Jews and the 'Downtown' Russian Jews in New York City, often reflected in the communal institutions they created, was a constant of American Jewish life in the early part of this century.[27] These tensions are an indication that the communities were not always unified on their goals, a challenge to the stereotype that these groups were monolithic in their beliefs under a single leader.

One final reason that these groups have significance comes from my reading of Robert Coles book, The Call of Stories. His argument that stories can make learning imaginative and personal are pertinent because frequently documentation about mutual aid groups and self-help comes in the form of narrative. The use of the Rose Schneiderman and "Southern Colored Woman"

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[24] Chan, 74.
[25] Records, 9.
[26] See two selections in the Class Materials and Assignments section on Ida Wells-Barnett and Bishop Henry Turner. A very good source for DuBois views on Washington is his The Souls of Black Folks. A succinct and perceptive discussion of Washington and DuBois appears in Meier, Negro Thought In America, 190-247.
[27] See Moses Rischin, The Promised City: New York Jews, 1870-1914 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 95-111, and Irving Howe, World Of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), *passim*.

stories from the book Plain Folk in my presentation show the potential for stories in presenting these concepts.[28] The excerpts from articles, books, and primary sources that appear in the Class Materials and Assignments section of this project are based on the belief that such materials can be used to generalize from the particular and stimulate student interest in this area.

What materials to include in the Class Materials and Assignments section of the project necessitated having a definition of what mutual aid and self-help groups were and are. Since the creation of class-usable information was the primary goal of this project to enhance the understanding of minority groups in this country, the definition was dependent to some extent on what material was available for use in the classroom. The profusion of organizations was striking. Nelson Pichardo in his article on Mexican American associations in California in the early years of this century observed that there were Chambers of Commerce, religious societies, barrio organizations, *mutualistas*, and recreation associations. While most were local and locally financed, some societies were state-wide, and even regional in scope. The Alianza Hispano Americana had fifty-six branches in California while the Union Patriotica y Benefica Mexicana had local associations in several of the southwestern states. Pichardo ended his article with a lengthy listing of all of the associations he had discovered in his investigations.[29] Zaragosa Vargas in a study of Mexican industrial workers in the Midwest in the years 1917-1933 found that these laborers had established numerous societies in cities like Detroit and Indiana Harbor. The Inland Steel plant In Indiana Harbor had a Works of St. Joseph society composed of Mexican

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[28] Coles, The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989) and David M. Katzman and William Tuttle, Jr., Plain Folks: The Life Stories of Undistinguihed Americans (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 124-131, 186-194.

[29] See Pichardo, "Chicano Voluntary Associations."

workers. The association celebrated Mexican patriotic and religious holidays, presented plays, poetry readings, and art exhibits dedicated to encouraging Mexican culture, and even contributed to the construction of a Mexican Catholic Church.[30] The Jewish Communal Register, with its description of Jewish communal societies in New York City, the center of American Jewry, found in 1917-1918 that there were 3997 Jewish associations in the city, or one for every 375 Jews. The Register lists over a hundred pages of *landsmanshaftn* alone.[31] Jack C. Ross and Raymond Wheeler found in the African-American community of Tampa, Florida, in the late 1960's that there were ten types of voluntary associations to which blacks belonged: groups associated with churches; regular lodges; mutual aid lodges; veterans' associations; parent-teacher associations; political societies; professional, business, and service groups; sports and athletic associations; social groups; and black civil rights organizations. [32] For Asian Americans Sucheng Chan found an extensive network of associations among the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Asian Indians. Family and clan associations that contributed aid to the new immigrants, rotating credit

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[30] See Zaragosa Vargas, Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[31] Henry Feingold, The Jewish People in America: A Time For Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920-1945 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 155; The Jewish Communal Register, 736-840. Information on some of the Jewish organizations will appear in the Classroom Materials and Assignments section of this report.

[32] Ross and Wheeler, Black Belonging: A Study of the Social Correlates of Work Relations Among Negroes (Wesport, CN: Greenwood Publishing, 1971), 101-102. This is a fascinating work which investigates the correlation between the type of work that African-Americans did and their membership in the various associations. The authors believe that the workplace and with whom African-Americans work affected their membership in such societies. Where blacks worked with other blacks, those African-Americans tend to join more organizations as do those who are at the higher end of the income scale. Although the reading is a little dry in places, the findings were extremely illuminating.

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associations, language schools, guilds for particular economic groups, trade associations like the Japanese Cloth Dye Association in San Francisco, Young Men's Buddhist Associations, and spiritual or religious societies were established in many Asian American enclaves.[33] Some of these groups were philanthropic; others were religious, educational, or social. In many situations, an association pursued several functions. The African Baptist Churches in antebellum Richmond, Virginia, not only provided religious succor for their congregants, but also created committees for the distribution of charity to indigent African-Americans in the city, sent aid to struggling black churches in cities like Detroit and Savannah, and provided help for the poor of famine-wracked Ireland. The first African Baptist Church even operated an illicit mail system, without the knowledge of their white minister, to encourage slaves to escape and informing the slaves of the best possible routes to freedom.[34] Where I could locate what I considered appropriate material reflecting the above kinds of societies, I decided that this would fit within a definition of a mutual aid society as ,long as it was run by the ethnic group which it was intended to help.

Such material was not always available or would have been difficult to use in a classroom. Consequently, I believed that I could use materials reflecting and self-help and mutual aid that were not part of specific associations or societies. For example, the use of editorials from ethnic newspapers might express certain self-help values. One of best examples of this would be the role of the Chicago *Defender* in encouraging and promoting the Great Migration of blacks north to escape the oppression of the Jim Crow South and its continual

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[33] Chan, 63-78, *passim*.

[34] John T. O'Brien, "Factory, Church, and Community: Blacks in Antebellum Richmond," The Journal of Southern History, XLIV (November, 1978), 509-536, *passim*. This article, which has also appeared in a reader for an Advanced Placement level textbook is in the Classroom Materials and Assignments section.

promotion of race pride. The newspaper in a limited way even helped migrants find jobs; many black southerners wrote to the paper asking for help in obtaining a job.[35] The whole concept of self-help, as I noted earlier in this paper, was very much a part of American ideology. Rather than examine turgid philosophical writings by intellectuals like William Graham Sumner or Andrew Carnegie's The Gospel of Wealth , I thought that an examination of children's stories would provide a different way of showing how American society encouraged this belief. Thus the comparison of stories from the McGuffey Reader and Floyd's Flowers, an early twentieth century compilation of children's stories for African-Americans, might show how these ideals were common to Americans of many backgrounds.[36]

Conventions of ethnic groups were another source for beliefs about self-help that were not properly mutual aid organizations. A wonderful resource in this regard was the two-volume compilation of the proceedings of antebellum black state conventions, edited by Philip Foner and George E. Walker. There are numerous expressions of race pride, calls for education for black children, demands for political equality, and resistance to the prevailing stereotypes. An examination of these proceedings can give students an idea of the attitudes of antebellum free blacks and help expand the discussion of African-Americans beyond slavery and civil rights. Arthur Goren's New York Jews and the Quest for

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[35] See James R. Grossman, Land Of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), *passim*.

[36] The lessons are in the Classroom Materials and Assignments section of this project. My decision to use the children's stories was facilitated when I could find neither Sumner nor Carnegie's work in the Butler Library. The stories, I think, are a more evocative approach to ascertaining the extent of these ideals. Such stories are probably read more frequently than Sumner or Carnegie's work. The work of Horatio Alger was available but the length made the Reader and Floyd's Flowers more accessible. Both works are cited in the Bibliography section of this project.

Community is the history of the Kehillah experiment, an effort in the early twentieth century to unite the disparate factions of the American Hebrew community and better organize the communal self-help efforts. Although the Kehillah was not a convention, the leaders organized several meetings in an effort to unify the community, efforts which eventually failed. Again the expression of community self-help is manifest in these attempts in spite of the resulting failure to unite the community.[37]

With all of these considerations, I determined that the most suitable definition for this project would be one that fit the goals I have already delineated. Consequently I was most interested in any association or organization within an ethnic or minority community that provided mutual aid within that community or encouraged self-help within that populace. This project by no means is comprehensive in its depiction of these enterprises. Civil rights organizations and ethnic labor unions are certainly self-help activities. Rose Parks refusing to relinquish her seat on the bus, Cesar Chavez leading the migrant farm workers on strike, the making of the movie *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, and the speech of Clara Lemlich in Yiddish which led to the 'revolt of the twenty thousand,' a strike of Jewish and Italian women shirtwaist makers in 1909 are stirring examples of self-help through civil rights activity and ethnic labor unions. The sheer amount of material available, however, led me to concentrate

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[37] Foner and Walker, eds. Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 2vols. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, ?); Goren, New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922 (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970). I have put together several lesson plans based on the proceedings of the black state conventions. They comprise the largest source of materials in the Classroom Materials and Assignments section. The work on the Kehillah was very illuminating, but, at this time, I have no lesson plans based on that work.

on expressions of self-help and associations that had mutual aid as their most significant goals.[38]

This project faced several problems. Even though I was generally excluding civil rights and labor union material, some of the documents and articles may allude to such activities. If the document or article was one that could possibly be used in class, then I erred on the side of including it. The myriad of organizations among the African Americans, Jewish Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans meant that the project would only partially cover the topic. Since many of the documents and some of the articles were in Yiddish, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, or Chinese, languages in which I have no skills, the information was limited to materials in English. Most of the documents and articles concern African Americans and Jewish Americans. This resulted from my enrollment in African American and Jewish American history courses at Columbia. On my own I have tried to remedy the shortcoming with some investigations of my own, but there is much more that could be done.

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[38] The materials on Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement are quite extensive. Two sources that might be useful for some primary sources are Eliot Wigginton, Refuse To Stand Silently By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Activism in America, 1921-1964 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), an excellent introduction to many in the civil rights movement and the Highlander Center that educated many of them in civic activism and Howell Raines, My Soul Is Rested (?), a solid oral history of civil rights activists. For an introductory account of Cesar Chavez, see Rodolfo Acuna, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 324-330. For brief introductions to the 'revolt of the twenty thoudsand,' see Rischin, 247-252; Howe, 297-300; and Susan A. Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 167-206. For more on the Vincent Chin case, see Chan, 176-178 and Ronald Takaki, Strangers From A Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans (New York: Penguin, 1989), 481-484. The movie was made after a classic case of American injustice where two whites, one an autoworker and the other a student never spent a day in jail for the baseball bat beating death of a Chinese American they mistook for a Japanese, a group they blamed for the demise of the American auto industry.

The most significant problem is how to get this material into history courses. High school students in the United States are almost always required to take a survey of American history or electives that count for the United States history requirement. Teachers are under pressure to complete as much history as they can, usually for Advanced Placement, competency, or regents tests. The question is how can this material be incorporated into courses that already have too much to cover? I believe that trying to create a unit on self-help would have little chance of success with the demands that history teachers already face. My suggestion, as I make clear in the section on Classroom Materials and Assignments is to incorporate the materials in accepted frameworks of U. S. history such as Progressivism and Reconstruction or semester courses such as African American history or Asian American history. For example the information on the early twentieth century activities of the National Association of Colored Women and the national Council of Jewish Women could be utilized in the teaching of the Progressive era. This, I hope, would allow teachers to apply those materials that would be most applicable to their classes. Until such time as the time given for U. S. history is extended, this will probably be the best solution.

One other issue involving the materials is the time-frame of the documents and articles. There was no strict plan to find a certain number of possible lesson plans for particular time periods. Most of the material is from the years 1800 to 1930. This is not to say that mutual aid and self-help associations no longer exist although their number might be diminished with the greater government involvement since the New Deal. Emmett Carson in a working paper for the Center for the Study of Philanthropy described the extensive

philanthropic activities still evident in the black community.[39] The Jewish Communal Register lists among the *landsmanshaftn* the Bialistoker Young Men's Association, located at 175 East Broadway. Near that location today is a home for the aged run under the Bialystoker name.[40] As discussed earlier in this paper, the Hebrew Free Loan Society continues to operate today. Al Santoli, editor of an oral history on the post World War II immigration, interviewed a Vietnamese refugee family that helped to establish local agencies in Chicago to deal with the shock of coming to an alien country, the United States, and the son of a Mexican immigrant was involved in El Paso Adelante, a community group attempting to lower the high dropout rate among Mexican-American students.[41] Thus the materials available for classroom use in this project are from many different time periods although the bulk are from the pre-New Deal period.[42]

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[39] Carson, "Black Volunteers As Givers And Fundraisers," paper prepared for the Center for the Study of Philanthropy, City University of New York, Conference on "Volunteers and Fundraisers," November 14, 1990

[40] The Jewih Communal Register, 741. I have seen the home on one of my tours of the Lower East Side. I am making a supposition that I will have to investigate on my next tour.

[41] Santoli, New Americans: An Oral History, Immigrants and Refugees in the U. S. Today (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 114-123, 288-292. These two selections are in the Classroom Materials and Assignments section of this project.

[42] This paragraph raises another question for which I have no adequate answer. How successful were these voluntary associations? Many were short-lived while others continue to have a fruitful existence. Some have changed their missions. For example, the Educational Alliance and the University Settlement House on Eldridge Street were organized when the Lower East Side was a Jewish ghetto. Today the overwhelming proportion of the population is Hispanic or Asian. Both organizations operate today with these populations rather than their original Jewish clientelle although there sixteen synagogues on the Lower East Side today and a guide for the Big Onion tours said the Jewish population in the area was increasing slightly. I decided that success was not as important criteria as the effort to simply organize such groups. Thus some of the classroom materials may refer to organizations that lasted a very short time. The significant aspect is that the attempt was made and what values the orgainzations espoused.

A last concern is how to disseminate these materials. Some of the information is covered under copyright, but my interest is making these materials available to teachers. I want teachers to consider using this information in their classes. Consequently, I plan to send copies of selected portions of the project to various teachers around the country whom I know and to make as many presentations as I can at conferences. How well these efforts will disseminate the project is unclear but it is a start.

One other possibility that at this point I find remote is to work on getting published the two papers that comprise two chapters of this work. Both papers involve ethnic and minority self-help. The first is an account of Victoria Earle Matthews, an African-American reformer and one of the Founders of the National Association of Colored Women, who established a settlement house and travellers aid service for African- American women in New York in the late nineteenth century. Never completely successful on its own, the White Rose Home (as it was known) was a precursor to other organizations which attempted to help young black women avoid the pitfalls of New York City. The second paper concerns the employment bureau of the New York Young Men's Hebrew Association. The agency specialized in semi and unskilled clerical jobs, but the paper is an effort to elucidate the importance of this agency in the Jewish community as well as an attempt to examine the life of young men as they pursued survival in America. Both are examples of possible research topics in areas where archives are available for the use of students. The limits of 'spreading the gospel' in these ways are evident to me but I think that a small start might be productive over a longer period of time.

The remainder of the project, then, is divided into the two chapters on Victoria Matthews and the employment bureau. There is another brief chapter on the history of African-American efforts to be educated in this country which might

be used on its own as an assignment (the bibliography for this particular paper was prepared by Teddy Reynolds, another Klingenstein fellow, for the entire TA 4070 project). Since these three pieces were originally written as separate papers for Columbia or Teachers College classes, the bibliographies for these chapters of the project follow the conclusion of each chapter. Finally there is the Classroom materials and Assignments section. The introduction to that section will explain how it is organized and how the information may be used in class. A bibliography with annotations for many works will follow although some of the annotations appear with the assignments to give some background on the documents to teachers who are interested in using the materials in class.

Victoria Earle Matthews: Making A Difference in the Lives of African-American Women

> "[T]he youth of our race, educated and uneducated alike, will pay with their bright young lives, and the sacrifice of all that is noble, not only for our ignorance, but our sinful negligence in watching over and protecting our struggling working class. . . . Many of the dangers confronting our girls from the South in the great cities of the North are so perfectly planned, so overwhelming in their power to subjugate and destroy that no woman's daughter is safe away from home. . . . [N]o woman here can shirk without sin the obligation to study into this matter, to the end that the evil may be completely exterminated, and protection guaranteed to the lives and reputations of the generations yet to come. . . . Let women and girls become enlightened, let them begin to think, and stop placing themselves voluntarily in the power of strangers. . . . [I]t is meet that appeal should be made at this conference not only in behalf of Virginia's absent daughters, but the long-suffering cruelly wronged, sadly unprotected daughters of the entire South."[1]

Victoria Earle Matthews' speech probably surprised few delegates to the Hampton Negro Conference in 1898. Well-known in the African-American community as an author, journalist, and activist, she was a logical choice to speak on the problems young southern black women faced as they migrated to northern urban areas. A resident of Brooklyn, she had worked as a domestic servant in New York City in her youth.[2] From her own life she must have been familiar with the difficulties of servant life although apparently one of her employers had permitted her to read in his library when she was not busy.[3] Mrs. Matthews made very clear the problems that young black girls faced in cities like New York. She warned that "life in New York and other large centers [was] a perfect net-work of moral degradation for the unknowingly unfortunate who may happen to fall into its toils." She castigated both blacks and whites for participating in schemes whose sole purpose was to ensnare unsuspecting young women into illicit and immoral pursuits. The result of all this

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[1]Hampton Negro Conference *Proceedings*, Number 2, July, 1898, 63, 64, 69.

[2] There are several biographical sketches of Mrs. Matthews. See Edward T. James *et alia*, *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge, 1971); Dorothy Salem, *African-American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1993); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Brooklyn, 1993); Irvine Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, 1891); Lawson Scruggs, *Women of Distinction:Remarkable in in Works and Invincible in Character* (Raleigh, 1893); Monroe A. Majors, *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (Chicago, 1893); and Hallie Q. Brown, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (New York, 1988, reprint of 1926). As far as I know, there is no full length biography of Matthews nor is there a collection of her papers. Much of the information in these sources is similar.

[3] This is noted in several of the biographical sketches. See also Rayford Logan, *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York, 1982), 428.

was that the "public, seeing these women haunting certain portions of the city in such an unfailing stream, takes it for granted that all black people-- all Afro-Americans are naturally low." Consequently many individuals refused to hire black domestic help. Implicit throughout Matthews' speech was that such conditions tarnished the reputation of all African-Americans. Her call for action at Hampton was not only to educate those who were unfamiliar with this crisis, but also the expression of goals she was already pursuing, goals both very traditional and innovative.[4]

Victoria Earle Matthews had been active in African-American affairs since the early 1880's. Born in 1861 to a slave mother and (by family tradition) her mother's master, Victoria and three of her mother's other children were rescued from their master when her mother, who had escaped, returned to regain "legal custody" after the Civil War. The mother, Caroline Smith, was unable to find several of her children and found that "her two fair-skinned daughters [Victoria and her older sister, Anna] . . . were being reared as white in her former master's household. . . ." What effect the losing of siblings and being raised white had on the young Victoria is difficult to ascertain, but when she married William Matthews, a coachman, in 1879, she wrote the name of her slave father on her marriage certificate.[5] After brief sojourns in several Virginia cities, Victoria and her family settled in New York City around 1873. She had little formal schooling, but apparently was a voracious self-learner and frequent attendee at lectures while supporting a widowed mother.[6] In the early years of her marriage, she wrote short stories (apparently some of them about her childhood) and essays for a variety of publications. One contemporary author of Matthews states that she edited "'Household Columns' in several journals" as well as writing for most of the leading African-American journals and magazines in the 1880's.[7]
Contemporary black male and female authors had uniformly high praise for Mrs. Matthews. [8]

In the 1890's Victoria Matthews' endeavors began to include more social and political activism which would lead to her 1898 Hampton Conference speech. In these areas as well she would become acclaimed in the African-American community. G. F. Richings stated that Matthews "did grand work in gathering signatures for a petition

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[4] Hampton *Proceedings*, 1898, 62-69. The quotes are on pages 64 and 67.
[5] See footnote 2 for the sources of biographical information on Victoria Matthews. The quote and marriage certificate story are in James, *Notable American Women*, 510.
[6] Majors, 211; Hine, 760.
[7] Scruggs, 31.
[8] N.F. Mossell, *The Work of of the Afro-American Woman* (Philadelphia, 1908), 63, 64;Penn, 375-376; Scruggs, G.F. Richings, *Evidences of Progress Among Colored People* (Philadelphia, 1895), 403; Booker T.Washington, *Black Belt Diamonds; gems from the speeches, addresses, and talks to students, selected and arranged by Victoria Earle Matthews; introduction by T. Thomas Fortune* (New York, 1898), xii. For more information about MAtthews' work on this book, see Louis Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 4 (Chicago, 1975), 280, 403, 405, 422, 429-430. Fortune had great respect for Mrs. matthews' abilities. See Harlan, 131, 152.

asking that the Blair Bill might be passed in Congress." An organization that she had helped to found with long-time Brooklyn educator Maritcha Lyons, the Woman's Loyal Union of New York and Brooklyn, collected more than 10,000 signatures for the bill which proposed women's enfranchisement.[9] In the fall of 1892 the Union, under Mrs. Matthews leadership, organized a testimonial dinner of prominent African-American women for Ida B. Wells who could not return to her home in Memphis after a virulent white reaction to one of her anti-lynching editorials. With the money raised, Wells was able to print her pamphlet on the horrors of lynching in the South which she dedicated to African-American women.[10]

Mrs. Matthews, apparently a widow by the mid 1890's, became further interested in reform when her only child, a son, died in 1894. That her interests were increasingly focused on young African-American women and African-American women in general is evident from her activities. In July, 1895, Matthews was an instrumental force in the creation of the National Conference of Colored Women at a Boston meeting. A contemporary account of the meeting declares that her vigilance and leadership helped create a national organization, the National Federation of Afro-American Women.[11] Matthews also gave a speech entitled 'The Value Of Race Literature' which apparently caused considerable comment. Praising the new publication of the National Federation, *The Woman's Era*, Matthews concluded her speech:

> no one except [black women journalists] can appreciate the bitter experience and sore disappointments under which they have at all times been compelled to pursue their chosen vocations.
>
> If their brothers of the press have had their difficulties . . . , I am here as a sister journalist to state, from the fullness of knowledge, that their task has been an easy one compared with that of colored women in journalism.
>
> Women's part in Race Literature, as in Race building, is the most important part and has been so in all ages. . . . All through the most remote epochs she has done her share in literature. . . .[12]

Her proposed topics for discussion at the 1896 National Federation meeting reflected her increasingly varied interests: "The need of rescue work among our people, by our

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[9] Richings, 403; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York, 1984), 129. For more on the Loyal Union, see Hine, 1278-1279. In addition to suffrage, the Union was involved in a number of social welfare activities.

[10] Mossell, 31; Giddings, 30-31; Mildred Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnet: An Exploratory Study of An American Black Woman, 1893-1930* (Brooklyn, 1990), 32.

[11] Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, 1880-1920* (Brooklyn, 1990), 27-28.

[12] Richings, 403; The speech excerpt is quoted in Henry Louis Gates' introduction to Brown, xv-xvi. This is the only part of the speech I have read. With further investigation I probably could find the whole speech.

women," prison reform, plans for an exhibit by African-American women at the Paris exposition in 1900, "The separate car law," The Plantation woman and child," and how could the National Federation better serve African-American women.[13] However, the National Federation and another African-American women's group, the National Colored Women's League met together in 1896 and merged. By all accounts Victoria Matthews played a notable role in the creation of the new group, the National Association of Colored Women.[14] Mrs. Matthews would seem to have had a bright future as a prominent leader at the national level of African-American women.

However, in between these two meetings, she was in Atlanta in December, 1895, attending the Congress of Colored Women of the United States at the Atlanta Exposition. Following that conference, she toured the South, especially New Orleans, investigating 'red-light' districts and employment agencies, "exposing conditions through which young, innocent colored girls from the rural districts of the South were being exploited" and "ways that were dark and unwholesome, morally, to our unprotected girls seeking work in northern cities." One way that Matthews was able "fearlessly and unobserved through the black belt" to do this was "her personality and natural endowment, physically, which gave her entree to places, and conditions in the South not accessible to many of our women." In other words, she had 'passed' temporarily to gather her information.[15] Although she considered staying in the South and stayed with Booker T. Washington part of the spring of 1896, she returned to New York, apparently a disciple of Washington, to "start practical work among my people" in the district "lying between 59th and 127th streets, from Park to First Avenue, [where] there are about 6,000 Afro-Americans, who have mostly been driven away from Bleecker Street by the influx of Italians."[16] Thus Matthews was moving toward the issues that would dominate the remainder of her life, concerns that she fully addressed in the Hampton Conference speech in 1898. Her great concern about urban rather than southern blacks came just as the shifts in African-American population were beginning to occur. She would be one of the first reformers to take action to help African-Americans adjust to the city.[17]

As Matthews pointed out in her speech to the Hampton Conference in 1898 and in a Negro Women's Conference in Hampton in 1899, African-Americans were migrating to northern cities. Although she hoped to discourage "this custom among our girls of leaving good homes in the South for uncertain ones in the North," there seemed to be little chance

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[13] Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, *Lifting As They Climb* (Washington, 1933), 22. Charles Wesley says that Booker T. Washington and William Lloyd Garrison attended the Boston meeting. Wesley, *The History of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs: A Legacy of Service* (Washington, 1984), 35.

[14] Davis, 1; Wesley, 36, 37, 38; Hine, 760.

[15] Davis, 22. Davis describes Matthews as a "tall, well-built, graceful brunette." *Ibid.* The photographs of Matthews and line drawings in several of the sources show a woman with virtually no trace of African features at all.

[16] T. Thomas Fortune to Booker T.Washington, March 13, 1896, in Harlan, 136; Brown, 211, quoting Matthews from an undated article in the *New York Sun*.

[17] Salem, 353.

of that. Gilbert Osofsky in his study of Harlem states that over 41,000 southern African-Americans moved north per decade, 1870-1890, Victoria Matthews and her family being part of that migration. The following decade that migration doubled. Many of them were settling in New York City. The steady stream continued in the first decade of the twentieth century, leading one black journalist to state in 1913, "[w]hat to do with the needy and those who fall by the wayside is becoming a problem of the greatest magnitude. . . ." Victoria Matthews had begun worrying about that issue in 1897.[18]

Even before her speech to the Hampton Conference in 1898, Matthews had been making plans to deal directly with the problems she had discovered. Her travels through the South, her observations of the conditions in New York City, and, perhaps, her own experiences as a domestic servant had crystallized in her a determination to confront these problems. Returning to New York, she began working with poverty-stricken African-American families. She showed mothers how to prepare proper meals, helped with the laundry, and began to hold "mothers' meetings at the various homes where I visited."[19] From the beginning there was white philanthropic support for her activities. Matthews recounted to a *New York Sun* reporter in 1897 that at one of the mothers' meetings "we prayed especially for a permanent home where we might train the boys and girls and make a social center for them where the only influence would be good and true and pure." Winthrop Phelps of the noted philanthropic family donated the use of a flat in an apartment building at 234 East 97th Street, a four story tenement located near the stables and car house of the Second Avenue Railroad Company for three months "to make [the] experiment."[20] In a letter to Booker T. Washington six months before she spoke at Hampton and almost a year after she had the temporary facilities on 97th Street, Matthews explained her goals and her acceptance of the Washington principles. She wanted to "secure a good-sized house" with the upper portion being used "as a temporary lodging house for women and girls coming from the South or other parts to New York in search of work." She wanted to prepare them properly for work with church-going families and to be "looked after by respectable women until they make association of a proper and wholesome nature." In the remaining portions of the house would be places "for classes in domestic sewing[,] dressmaking, milenery[*sic*], cooking, marketing-- in other words, common sense housekeeping. . . ." Her plans went beyond help for young women. She hoped to have "a daily kindergarten and manual training for boys--also lectures in regard to domestic service for young men and boys-- in time other departments--trades and professional branches--(typing, Stenography, book keeping[*sic*] ect). The building to have a reading room, Library and Gymnasium." She stated very clearly her support for Washington's views: "I realized when in Tuskegee as never before the need for such work in New York City. . . ." When Matthews spoke at Hampton in 1898, she had already

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[18] Hampton *Proceedings*, 1899, 46; Osofsky, *Harlem:The Making of a Ghetto*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1971), 18. The quote is from the *New York Age*, June 5, 1913, in Osofsky, p. 18.

[19] Brown, 211.

[20] *Ibid.*, 211,212; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps: The City of New York: Borough of Manhattan*, 1896, 166.

started confronting the problems facing African-Americans, especially women, when they arrived in New York City.[21]

The task was a daunting one for Matthews. For a woman who often was forthright and direct, she admitted some apprehension in her letter to Washington. Distracted by the death of her son, she "not only did not know how to start but had not the tact to seek advice from authorities when chance and fortune offered." She confessed her reluctance to impose on Washington because she feared "trading on friendship and the fact that [she] had been a guest in [his] house." In addition she felt that she had little influence in New York, a point she thought "has been clearly demonstrated," a reference perhaps to difficulties in gaining support. She wanted to establish a program "calculated to stand the wear and tear" with the "success or failure of this work [depending] upon the method I proceed by." She asked for any advice that Washington might give her, noting that she was not sensitive, and that she hoped to "see the Tuskegee System" brought to New York "with needed local additions. . . ." This latter reference is the only mention that Matthews had plans that might reflect the particular needs in New York City.[22]

Whatever qualms Matthews felt about using Washington's influence did not prevent her from going to a school supplies store within four days of her letter and invoking Washington's name.

> Oh yes-- your name gave us quite an opening at the headquarters for Kindergarten supplies whither we went, after talking awhile I asked for reduced rates for missions &-- telling him of the work-- I said I want to plant a 'miniature Tuskegee' in 97th st.[,] immediately he wished to know if I knew of your work-- knew you-- had ever been South, and a multitude of questions. You can imagine my answers-- he has very great respect for your name. When we asked the price of what we had selected-- to our great delight he made us a nice contribution and said he intended doing more for us in the future.

Matthews was very pleased and thought Washington would want know "about our good fortune" even as she returned to the deferential tone of the earlier letter when she said, "It may not be right to send you so long a letter. . . "[23] Matthews seems to have been able to combine a certain directness with the ability to assume the proper and traditional attitudes when necessary.

Washington must have been impressed with what Mrs. Matthews was doing. In the above letter she makes reference to an impending Washington visit to New York and asks, "When you come up on the 12 Feb.[*sic*] kindly plan to give me 30 minutes." Whether they met is unclear, but Matthews felt secure in asking for a meeting without assuming a

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[21] Victoria Earle Matthews to Booker T. Washington, January 8, 1898, in Harlan, 361-362.

[22] *Ibid.* For descriptions of Matthews' dynamic personality, see Thomas Fortune to Booker T. Washington, May 28, 1898, June 3, 1898, *Ibid.*, 422, 429-430; Brown, 215,216.

[23] Victoria Earle Matthews to Booker T. Washington, January 12, 1898, in *Ibid.*, 364.

deferential attitude. At the request of Thomas Fortune, Washington had spoken already at a fundraiser for Mrs. Matthews' mission in September, 1897. Seeing the derelicts in the neighborhood of the mission, Washington told her, "My friend I wouldn't change fields with you."[24] Whether he spoke in February for her mission is uncertain, but apparently his support, influence, and advice were helpful at least in the early stages of her mission.

The White Rose Mission as Matthews named it started then as a settlement house for African-Americans. Floris Barnett Cash has stated that the "founders of black settlement houses displayed the same spirit of social justice which was common to white reformers." They concentrated on "practical objectives," but African-Americans established their own settlement houses due to discrimination, and they wished to have "their own institutions."[25] In this regard Matthews was very much within the self-help traditions of the African-American community, especially African-American women. Anne Firor Scott has written a succinct account of African-American women's self-help activities that indicates clearly that such endeavors were an integral and indispensable part of African-American communities from the late 1700's. In church as well as secular organizations, black women strived to improve their own lives as well as the lives of those around them. In addition as Victoria Matthews declared in her Hampton speech, these women were rejecting the stereotypical views that whites had of African-American women, proving that the conventional attitudes were wrong.[26] Another historian, August Meier, has clearly delineated the importance of self-help and cultural nationalism within the black community in the years 1880-1915. '[W]hile all did not hold to the entire complex of ideas of race pride and solidarity, of economic development and self-help, of the value in segregated social institutions, each of these viewpoints was growing in popularity, and there was a marked tendency for them to cluster together." This, Meier

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[24] *Ibid.*; *New York Sun*, September 14, 1897, cited in Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist* (Chicago, 1972), 126.

[25] Floris Barnett Cash, "Radicals or Realists: African-American Women and the Settlement House Spirit in New York City," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (January, 1991), 8.

[26] Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *The Journal of Southern History*, (February, 1990), 1-22. I am indebted to my friend and fellow teacher Emily Warner for bringing this article to my attention. It has proved valuable in a number of ways. The footnotes are excellent bibliographical sources for the literature on the self-help activities of African-American women. See also Gerda Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women," in Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in American History: The Twentieth Century*, vol. 3 (Brooklyn, 1990), 855-865. Lerner and Scott both mention Victoria Earle Matthews and the White Rose Home. For a discussion of attitudes toward black women, see Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, 1880-1920* (Brooklyn, 1990). For two contemporary views of African-American women, see "The Life Story of a Southern White Woman," 208-216, and "The Life Story of a Southern Colored Woman," 217-224, in Hamilton Holt, ed., *The Life Stories of {Undistinguished} Americans As Told by Themselves* (New York, 1990).

manifestly states, "was not necessarily held to the exclusion of interest in agitation for civil rights and political activity."[27]

The activities at the White Rose Mission were clearly part of the overall self-help movement and the traditions of the African-American community. As well they reflected the influence of Booker T. Washington. White Rose had vocational courses in cooking, sewing, dressmaking, woodcarving, cobbling, chaircaning, basketry, and clay modeling. Alice Ruth Moore, the future Mrs. Paul Lawrence Dunbar, taught a kindergarten class. According to various sources Washington and the poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar spoke at cultural events at the Mission. The Home helped black women coming to New York in search of employment by providing temporary housing "in a Christian, industrial, and nonsectarian home." Accommodations were generally for one night to six weeks, and women could, for a one dollar year fee use the home for a "week's rest . . . and use . . . the sewing machines." Floris Cash says that White Rose had its "own employment and placement service."[28]

Mrs. Matthews also had not forgotten the thrust of her speech in Boston in 1895 about the value of 'race literature.' Hallie Brown who worked for six years at the White Rose said Mrs. Matthews "was an enthusiast on the subject and placed in the White Rose Home a choice collection of books written by and about the Negro in America, forming, as a white reporter wrote, 'One of the most unique special libraries in New York.'" She used them as "a basis for her class in Race History." Brown found it inspiring "to see this frail women, her life slowly ebbing away," imparting "to a group of intelligent young men and women the knowledge of the work and worth" of African-Americans.[29] This also would place Matthews in the mainstream of black thinking. D.W. Straker had written in1888 in his book *The New South Investigated*, "There is enough history of the Negro race to make a Negro proud of his race. . . . Why not teach the Negro child more of himself and less of others, more of his elevation and less of his degradation?" Both William Wells Brown and George Washington Williams had written histories of African-Americans, and William T. Alexander's *History of the Colored Race In America* had had several editions in the late nineteenth century.[30] Yet, Matthews' class might have been one of the few being actually taught at this time in New York City.

An incident in 1900 caused the White Rose Mission to engage in a new endeavor. Mrs. Matthews had been asked to meet a young African-American woman who was coming from Jacksonville to New York to look for work. She met the ship at the appointed time, but "one of those unprincipled men who haunt the incoming ships[probably representing one of the many unscrupulous employment agencies] lured [the girl] away. . . ." After a search of several days the young woman was found, having passed through "a terrible experience . . . a perfect wreck of her former self."[31] Matthews concluded she would have to organize women to meet the young migrants at

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[27] Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor, 1966), 55.
[28] Hine, 1258-1259; Wesley, 208; Cash, 10-11.
[29] Brown, 215.
[30] Quoted in Meier, 53.
[31] Brown, 213.

the docks as they arrived to prevent their entrapment by shady employment agents and those looking to ensnare unsuspecting women into immoral activities. Finding volunteers including her older sister, Anna Rich, in New York and Norfolk from where many steamers arrived, she established a traveler's aid service, one of the first in the country. Matthews named it the White Rose to symbolize "purity, goodness and virtue," quintessential nineteenth century Victorian values.[32]

From the available records it is a little difficult to tell how successful the Mission was in its goals. The Mission moved several times before it found a home for eighteen years at 217 East 86th Street. In 1902 a speaker at the annual Hampton Negro Conference described the building as three stories with a basement. The Mission carried "on its work by classes, clubs, friendly visits, and lectures, reaching over 1,100 people and employing three salaried and two volunteer workers." The neighborhood was apparently in transition. According to the 1911 fire insurance maps for the Borough of Manhattan, the Mission was located near the J. Lauchheimer Department Store and across the street was the Yorkville Casino. Nearby there were several churches and one synagogue as well as the East Side YMCA, the Convent of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, the Yorkville Theatre, and a moving pictures theatre.[33]

The only extant annual report for the White Rose Industrial Association is for 1911-1912, five years after Victoria Matthews had died of tuberculosis. It gives us some concrete evidence to judge the success of the Mission, and it shows that her goals had survived her. The 'Home For Working Girls' (as it was labeled on the fire insurance maps) had been open every day in 1911-1912 and "fruitful in work." Unfortunately finances had forced them to relinquish the Norfolk portion of the travelers' aid project to the National League for Protection of Colored Women, an organization established by Frances Kellor after the White Rose that attempted to perform similar activities on a national scale. A cobbling class for boys had been started as had a "training and cooking class." Efforts to use the large yard as a playground for the neighborhood children for part of the day failed "as some objection was made to the noise," and the Mission "felt obliged to give it up." The Home had no debt, but would need $1500 for the coming year. The Mothers' Club met one night a week for sewing instruction, "music, reading and helpful talks." On the third Sunday of the month, "there was special singing, and frequently addresses [were] made by well-known white or colored friends." At times during the year, the lodging facilities had been "severely taxed," especially in the spring and fall. The length of stay in the Home was limited to three weeks, but with the "present customs in apartment life" there was often no room for a live-in servants, leading the young women to lodgings "sometimes in surroundings not of the best." Although there was a weekly lodging charge of $1.25, all were made welcome, "and we do what we can for them." The conditions of the girls varied. Some were penniless, some ill, and some were "sent here to save them from vicious surroundings, of which they knew nothing when they left home." With the

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[32] *Ibid.*, 214; Cash, 7, 10; Davis, 232; Wesley, 19. Cash gives the date as 1898.

[33] Hampton Negro Conference, no. 7 (July, 1904), 140; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan*, vol. 8, 1911, 24, 25. The change in the neighborhood is clear by 1929 when the Dalton School, an elite prep school, had been constructed in the area and the casino was gone.

help of "respectable employment agencies," the Home had been able to find work for many. There continued to be "splendid co-operation" with the "Old Dominion S.S. Company" at Old Dominion Pier No. 26, North River. The company had never refused "to send some poor boy or girl back who had failed to make good in the North." A girls social club, composed of young women in the home and those returning on their day off, had organized a musical club that studied piano and "vocal music." Another neighborhood club was connected to this musical group and had "selected the [White Rose] as a centre for its activities and given valuable assistance to the Home." The Victoria Earle Club taught girls "10 to 15 years" sewing and "deportment and table manners." A boys club, with the boys as the officers, received instruction in cobbling, chair caning, and basketry. "Mr. Locke, from the Urban Committee[National Urban League?], has charge of the athletic work" for the boys. During the severe winter of 1912, several families received assistance, and meals, lodging, carfare, and clothing were given to many women and girls. Friends of the home had made this possible, but more "second-hand clothing" was needed. An annual linen shower was successful as were the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. In 1911and 1912, over 250 young women each year were "helped to work" or "helped to continue journey."

The programs of the Home were quite extensive. It would seem that many of Victoria Matthews' desires had been achieved. Yet the Superintendent's report shows just how limited the resources available to the Home were. In both 1911 and 1912 the number of days of free lodgings exceeded the number of paid lodging days although not by much. The number of new lodgers in 1911 was 169 and 175 in 1912; more old lodgers returned in each of those two years. The Home had room for only six boarders, and only 48 young women in 1911 and 50 in 1912 had been brought by the White Rose Traveler's Aid to the Home although other organizations had sent young women over. What was probably disappointing was that the majority of young women "Returned to Home of own accord" in both years. The same records show, however, that 620 steamers in 1911 and 624 in 1912 were met at Pier 26 with 415 (1911) and 350 (1912) "women and girls assisted" for a "total number addressed" of 1155 (1911) and 1152 (1912). The figures don't add up, but a number of young women had been helped through the efforts of the home although those aided were only a small percentage of the migration into New York.

The treasurer's report indicated another aspect of the Home's activities. For the year ending December 31, 1912, the Home had almost $3400 in receipts and had spent slightly more than $3800. They had $28.84 in their account and $418.63 in the building fund on December 31, 1912. Only a balance from the previous year prevented them from going into debt. The major source of income was contributions while salaries, rent, board for the superintendent and her assistant, and utilities (gas, fuel, telephone) were the major expenditures. Several conclusions can possibly be drawn from this data. It indicates just how much of the work was volunteer or that some of the functions were covered by patrons who made their contributions in kind or simply financed the activities without it appearing in the books. The home was apparently not wired for electricity, and they did not own the building after eleven years of occupying it. White Rose must have been getting superior volunteer work from the people associated with it.[34]

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[34] White Rose Industrial Association, *Annual Report for the year ending December 31,*

The annual report also lists the subscribers and contributors, those who gave for the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners (a tree was also given at Christmas), and the Association members. W.E.B. DuBois and Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. were members of the Association of which there were 74 members. "Aunt Harriet Tubman" was one of the contributors to the Thanksgiving fund. Mrs. William Jay Schiefflin whose husband was a trustee at Tuskegee and Hampton was listed as having contributed to all activities. Other names of prominence in the white community who contributed were Grace Dodge and her sister Elizabeth, Mrs. C.P. Huntington, widow of the railroad magnate who had been a supporter of Tuskegee, Oswald Garrison Villard, Mrs. Seth Low, and John Wanamaker of department store fame. The amount of their donations are not listed, but it is clear that White Rose could draw on the support of prominent members in the black and white communities of New York. Mrs Matthews' friendship with Booker T. Washington must have had some influence, and the practices of the Home fit with his philosophy. Yet DuBois felt comfortable being a member as well. It would be interesting to know how much these contributors gave to the White Rose, but more significant, how much they donated to the other groups who had followed the path of the White Rose in trying to deal with the same problems. Either way White Rose had very good connections.[35]

Contemporaries and historians have been generous in their praise of Mrs. Matthews and the White Rose. Hallie Brown, writing of her in 1926 declared, "she was possessed with the desire to know that she might serve her race for which she had a devotion that amounted to a passion." Through the White Rose, "the illiterate, the needy, the destitute as well as some of the fine specimens of Negro womanhood" found welcome and support. Brown said "thousands of girls" were "sheltered, guided, fed, clothed when necessary"; others were "taught to work acceptably in the homes of the Metropolis and many others saved from lives of shame."[36] Mary L. Lewis who as a child had listened as Mrs. Matthews talked of organizing the home at the initial meeting in the Lewis house declared that 30,000 young African-American women had been helped through the efforts of the White Rose in twenty-eight years of service. Miss Lewis is an example of the dedicated volunteers. In 1925 she was working at the White Rose just as her mother had. Another such dedicated volunteer was Mary L. Stone. Miss Lewis said of her, "although of another race [she] has given unstintingly of her time, her means and her best thought to the carrying forward of the work."[37] At the Twelfth Biennial Session of the National Association of Colored Women at Tuskegee in 1920, Mrs. Frances Keyser who had been superintendent of the White Rose and later worked with Mary McLeod Bethune in Florida eulogized Mrs. Matthews. The two historians of the National Association praised the "unique piece of work done by this great woman" and the "fuller, richer lives of thousands of Negro girls . . . bear witness through the ages to the vision, the courage, the willing

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1912, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. The quotes from the three preceding paragraphs are all taken from this report which can be found in the Schomburg Center

[35] *Ibid.* 11-13; Nancy J. Weiss, *The National Urban League, 1910-1940* (New York, 1974), 20, for the information on Schiffelin

[36] Brown, 210, 214.

[37] Mary L. Lewis, "The White Rose Industrial Association: The Friend of the Strange Girl in New York," *The Messenger*, April, 1925, vol. VII, no. 4, 158.

sacrifice of a Negro woman with a frail body and a mighty soul."[38] Floris Barnett Cash who has written extensively on Victoria Matthews and the White Rose described her as a "pioneer in travelers' aid work" and a "realist" who presented "practical solutions" to the problems facing the New York black community.[39]

Perhaps Mrs. Matthews greatest success was in getting greater recognition in the wider community for the problems facing the African-American community in New York City. The White Rose was not the first organization to deal with these problems in New York City; the New York Colored Mission, a Quaker charity which had been established originally for religious instruction after the Civil War, was slowly transformed into a social welfare agency as the black population in the city increased in the 1880's and, especially, the 1890's. Osofsky characterizes the Colored Mission's contributions as "the modest exception" before the 1890's in dealing with the welfare of the black population.[40] After the establishment of the White Rose, the interest in the plight of African-American residents of the city increased dramatically. A speaker at the 1904 Hampton Negro Conference noted that the Greenwich House Settlement had opened a single room for use by black residents for club meetings, classes, and a small library in addition to sending social workers on friendly visits. The Greenwich House had also provided a fellowship to Mary White Ovington who later would be prominent in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to investigate the condition of blacks in New York City. Her findings would later be chronicled in *Half A Man*, an extensive discussion of the plight of blacks in the city.[41] In Hell's Kitchen, a free kindergarten for 60 children with mother's meetings and groups for older girls was established.[42] The Brooklyn YWCA also functioned in many ways as a social settlement.[43] White reformers associated with the White Rose became "concerned about urban conditions and the exploitation of black migrant women." Frances Kellor in her 1904 book *Out Of Work: A Study of Employment Agencies, Their Treatment of the Unemployed, and Their Influence*

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[38]Wesley, 19, 88; Davis, 232.

[39] Hine, 760; Cash, 14.

[40]Osofsky, 55.

[41] I was unable to find the library copies of this book, but I think it might have had some useful information on Victoria Matthews and the White Rose.

[42] Whether this is the same kindergarten described in Helen Emerson Titus's article, "Children of the Circle," in the October, 1905 issue of *Charities* is uncertain. Titus describes the kindergarten at 242 West 60th Street as "in the heart of one of the largest and worst colored settlements in the city, the scene of race riots of the succeeding summers," but having a positive influence in the neighborhood with "mothers meetings, clubs for older children, celebration of festivals, penny provident bank, excursions to the country and to the circus, visits to the homes, and exhibitions of work shared with other kindergartens." Even white children "were clamoring to be admitted" so a separate afternoon session, later dropped, was started. The area, Titus reported, was the scene of "junior race riots" between black and white teenagers. *Charities*, vol. XV, no. 1(October, 1905), 82,83. This issue has a number of studies of African-Americans in the northern cities including articles by Frances Kellor and Mary White Ovington.

[43] Hampton *Proceedings*, 1904, 140.

upon Homes and Businesses exposed the conditions that Victoria Matthews had investigated in the 1890's. Kellor was able to organize the Associations for the Protection of Negro Women in April, 1905, an umbrella group that coordinated activities of societies in the Northeast whose purpose was to prevent the exploitation of African-American women. Later Kellor united the local associations into the National League for the Protection of Colored Women in 1906. The White Rose worked with these groups as the annual report of 1911-1912 makes clear, but in 1905 and 1906 Matthews was battling tuberculosis and apparently going to sanitariums in an effort to be cured; she died in 1907.[44] How much Matthews and the volunteers of the White Rose were consulted in the organization of these groups is unclear; Kellor's group was performing many of the same services that White Rose had originated although expanding the program to other cities. Another group, the interracial Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York City (CIICN), was by 1908 sending agents to the docks to meet migrant black women although its major purpose was providing greater employment opportunities and vocational training for black workers.[45] Floris Cash declares that the White Rose Mission served as "a prototype for other black settlement houses in the North" including those in Chicago, Brooklyn, and Cleveland.[46] Elizabeth Davis, the first historian of the National Association of Colored Women, and Cash both contend that Matthews' travelers' aid volunteers were the model for the national travelers' aid societies.[47] The historians of the National Urban League acknowledged the contributions of Matthews and the White Rose in awakening other groups to the plight of African-American women in the northern urban areas.[48] White Rose representatives apparently were at some of the preliminary meetings that led to the organization of precursor agency that eventually became the National Urban League.[49] Clearly, Victoria Earle Matthews and the White Rose had a significant impact on efforts to deal with the problems of urban African-Americans prior to the massive migration of blacks north starting in the World War I years.

Dealing directly with these problems, however, must have been a constant struggle for the White Rose Mission itself. What effect Matthews' death had in 1907 is unclear; Cash contends it left the Mission "without a strong, vocal, national leader." The annual report for 1911-1912 listed "pressing needs" as a permanent home, "Two endowed beds costing $15 a month each," "screens for the bedrooms," funds to continue the cobbling class, and various items for the kitchen.[50] In 1918 the Home moved to 262 West 136th Street following the black migration to Harlem. The fire insurance maps for 1909, revised in 1939 show that the three story building had a basement, but that its condition was not

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[44] *Colored American*, April, 1907(XII, no. 4), 250.
[45] Cash,12; Hine,52.
[46] Cash, 14.
[47] *Ibid.*, 12; Davis, 232. See also Dorothy Salem, *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920* (Brooklyn, 1990), 45, 46.
[48] Weiss, 18, 28, 137; Guichard Parris and Lester Brooks, *Blacks In The City: A History of the National Urban League* (Boston, 1971), 6,7
[49] Parris, 23.
[50] Cash, 13; *White Rose Annual Report*, 13.

as good as the other dwellings around it. The location, however, was near the New York Urban League office, and within close walking distance were St. Phillips Church, the Harlem YMCA, free public baths built in 1924, the Lincoln theatre, a moving picture theatre, the Renaissance Casino, and the Abyssinian Baptist Church. Mary Lewis stated in 1925 that the great need was members paying $1 a year, money to purchase the home, and contributions for current expenses. According to the Works Progress Administration historian of the White Rose, the home only assisted blacks coming to New York in the 1930's; all other class activities had been eliminated. Yet Floris Cash notes that in spite of diminished membership, declining contributions, and reduced programs, the Home survived into the 1980's.[51] There could be no greater tribute to Victoria Earle Matthews; she had, as she had written to Booker T. Washington in 1898, created a program that could "stand the wear and tear." It was also a program that stimulated the reform efforts of others to deal with the problems facing African-Americans as they moved into the cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[52]

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[51] Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps: The City of New York: Borough of Manhattan*, vol. 11, 1909, revised 1939, 15; Lewis, 158; Lassalle Best, "History of theWhite Rose Mission and Industrial Association," WPA Research Paper, 1938, WPA Papers under 'Negro Organizations in New York,' reel #3, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library; Cash,14, 16-17.

[52] As I wrote this paper, I realized that there were a number of areas where additional research would have enhanced the quality and the conclusions of this paper. Some of the research material was located at other libraries; Professor Cash had access to some White Rose records the location of which was not given in her article. Some material I had planned to examine but did not do so. The more I examined Victoria Earle Matthews the more I wanted to know about her connections with Frances Kellor, Mary White Ovington, and Grace Dodge. At one point I thought I had run across a source that indicated that DuBois had spoken at the White Rose. Did this create a conflict with Washington? There is a 1903 letter from Matthews to Washington, but it is not in the edited works as far as I could tell. Did she give up writing to devote her time to the White Rose? At least one source said she was planning to write a series of black history books and had had a play on the true condition of blacks produced in Brooklyn by a black theatre troupe. I would have liked to examine the *Voice of the Negro* and *The Colored American Magazine* to see if they had articles or comments by or about Matthews. The Schomburg Center has microfilm of several black newspapers for which she wrote; an examination of those might reveal more about the woman. I could find only excerpts of her speech on 'Race Literature' and a speech she gave in San Francisco in July, 1987, on "The Awakening of the Afro-American Woman" is in the Rare Books Library at Yale. Considering the respect her contemporaries had for her, an examination of her writings would be a very fruitful topic of research if one could find enough of her writings. Finally, a consideration of her place in the African-American community based on her extremely light skin color would be extremely interesting. The irony of all of this is that what I thought would be a brief and succinct research paper has mushroomed beyond the anticipated bounds.

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" One of the Highest Orders of Charity": The Employment Bureau of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York, 1874-1915

Max Fisch joined the Young Men's Hebrew Association in September, 1906, as an associate member at the age of eighteen.[1] He lived at 307 East 72nd Street (although some YMHA documents list his residence as 311 East 72nd Street) with his parents, Sarah and Louis, and at least one sibling, George David (or David) four years his junior who joined the YMHA at the same time. The Fisch residence was a four story frame building with a brick front and a metal, tile, or slate roof. The building, with a basement, had a frame light and air shaft with a noncombustible cornice. It was not a dumbbell tenement, but apparently a tenement of older construction. Most of the buildings on that block of 72nd Street between Second and First Avenues were similar.

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[1] The information on Max and George David Fisch, their jobs, and their YMHA activities has been compiled from a variety of sources. Membership cards, the *Monthly Bulletins: Young Men's Hebrew Association*, October, 1906, 4, June, 1908, 13, May, 1909, 6, June, 1910, 7, October, 1910, 8, November, 1910, 8, February, 1911, 52, September, 1911, 13, December, 1911, 13, February-March, 1912, 66, the Employment Register (Vacancies): YMHA of NY, May 1906-July 1910 [this is non paginated], and the Employment Register: YMHA of NY, September 1905- December 1908 [this is paginated, but I neglected to place the page numbers in my notes]. In using the latter two sources, any interested researchers should consult the following months in the Register (Vacancies), August, December, 1906; January, February, March, May, July, 1907; February, April, May, July, August, 1908, and in the Employment Register [Sept. 1905], September, December, 1906; January, April, July, 1907; April, June, July, 1908. All of the above materials are located in the archives of the 92nd Street "Y" in New York City. The information on the dwelling of the Fisch family comes from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Vol. 6 (1903-1919), 60, 68; Vol. 8 (1903-1919), 6, 14. The population figures concerning the census tract in which the Fischs lived is from Walter Laidlaw, ed., Population of the City of New York (New York: Cities Census Committee, 1932), 84, 292. The 1920 census materials, while not completely relevant to the period I am discussing, were the most accessible to me since my research time was limited. A further revision of this paper would make use of the New York City censuses of 1905 and 1915 and the United States Censuses of 1900 and 1910. The population figures on the Jewish presence in Harlem come from Jeffrey Gurock, When Harlem Was Jewish, 1870-1930 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 52, 54, 171.

The neighborhood was mostly residential. A synagogue was located across the street from the Fisch residence; a Roman Catholic Church, a Home For the Aged of the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Bohemian Evangelical Church, and a Sokol Gymnastic Association were not far from the Fisch tenement. There were two public schools in the neighborhood and a Manhattan Railway Station at the intersection of Second and 72nd. A few bakeries, drug stores, paint shops, a confectionery, and a Chinese laundry were the neighborhood businesses. An unnamed department store was situated on 75th and 1st. There were several cigar factories nearby and an unnamed "medium manufacturing" plant on 73rd and 2nd. For entertainment there was a "moving pictures" at 73rd and 1st, a block away from the Fisch apartment. Along the Fisch block of 72nd, the tenements were generally residential; only 305 East 72nd had a store on the lower level. Most stores were on 1st and 2nd Avenues. The east-west streets in this neighborhood were composed almost entirely of residential tenements.

The Fisch family was part of a large Jewish population located in this census district. In the area bounded by East 84th, the East River, East 64th, 3rd Avenue, East 63rd, and 5th Avenue in 1920, a total of 51,223 Jews lived among 153,874 residents. Roman Catholics with 51,095 and Protestants with 49,131 adherents were close behind in this very mixed neighborhood. There were a smattering of Greek Orthodox parishioners as well. Of the fourteen census tracts in this district, Jews predominated in five, Protestants in six, and Catholics in three. The area's population had actually declined slightly since the 1910 United States Census although it had increased by 14,000 since the New York census of 1915. Why this had occurred is not clear; it could simply reflect a more accurate count on the part of one or the other census gathering agency. Although the evidence is somewhat ambiguous, this area apparently was not as crowded as some of the census tracts in Jewish Harlem which in 1905 and 1910 had population densities as great as some of those on the Lower East Side. From this limited evidence, it seems that the Fisch family lived in a lower middle income neighborhood that was religiously diverse, mostly

residential, and much less crowded than two other concentrations of Jewish settlement, Harlem and the Lower East Side.

Why Max and David joined the YMHA is unclear, but both, especially the former, made considerable use of one of the YMHA's services, its employment bureau. Examining extant employment registers for the years 1905-1908, it is possible to follow Max's peregrinations from job to job. Most of the jobs that Max obtained were semi or unskilled clerical occupations, similar to other young men and the few women who used the agency. That the family might have needed the income of their two sons is possibly indicated by the fact that when David joined the YMHA at the age of fourteen years, two months, his membership card listed his employer as F.[?] E. Kanr [Kane?] at 438 Broadway; Max's card listed no employer.

Max, however, found work quickly, and, for the next three years, he would work at a great variety of clerical jobs. Apparently with a "modest and thoughtful nature," a "serene disposition" and a "big-heartedness that characterized his every deed," he wanted to "make up for the advantages that were lacking during his earlier years," perhaps a reference to family hardship. A friend observed that he had "crowded plans and strivings" and "trials and sacrifices," but he was "a source of inspiration to [his] social worker," again a possible allusion to financial difficulties in the family.

He apparently registered with the YMHA employment bureau in August, 1906. He was looking to be a bill clerk, earning $7 a week. The records indicate that he had last been employed with a Max Kamerling at 1448 2nd Street. This was within ten blocks of his home. He found a job with M. Newberg on Canal Street as an errand boy at $4 a week. This being a considerable distance from his home, he would most likely have to ride the elevated railway at a nickel each way. If his work week was six days, this was sixty cents of his weekly four dollars or 15% of his pay. How long he worked here is unclear, but the YMHA records indicate in December that he was an applicant for a job at an unnamed company as a bill clerk for $6 a week and later that month one of four applicants

the employment bureau sent to Laub Brothers on Greene Street for a job opening as an office assistant who needed "Good penmanship" in December. He was not hired for either job, but, still listing in YMHA records Kamerling as his last employer, he found work at Bleyer and Brothers, at 61 4th Avenue at $5 a week. The employment bureau, which had been a free service prior to this time, charged him a fee of $1 for helping him find the job. At the end of 1906 Max had had at least three jobs and applied for two others. Why he left the jobs is difficult to ascertain. Distance from home, transportation costs, dissatisfaction with working conditions, or a desire for better pay seem probable factors, especially the latter if we note that he wanted $7 a week, but had to settle for $4 in his first job. This seems to be a pattern in his employment life which would make him little different from other semi-skilled or unskilled workers of the period.

There is anecdotal evidence of this work transience and mobility among unskilled or semi-skilled workers. A street car conductor, in a1903 interview with Hamilton Holt's magazine, *The Independent*, bitterly observed that he had moved from Chicago to Pittsburgh to Philadelphia to Brooklyn to New York in hopes of finding a permanent job. Rose Schneiderman, in another issue of the same magazine, had a work history of several different jobs within the city of New York in a brief period:

> I got a place in Hearn's as a cash girl, and after working three weeks changed to Ridley's where I remained for two and a half years. I finally left . . . [and] got a place in the factory of Hein & Fox. . . .

An immigrant from China, Lee Chew, worked in San Francisco, a "town about 500 miles inland" (which is unnamed in his account), Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, and New York in the twenty years he had been in the United States.[2] Thus, it is not surprising that William Lhowe, a fifteen year old office boy, was hired through the YMHA employment bureau at

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[2] All three of these stories appear in David Katzman and William Tuttle, Jr., eds., Plain Folk: The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 14-21, 124-131, and 164-175. The quote is on page 126.

the National Arbitration and Peace Congress at $4 a week in the early part of April, 1907 and left that job, and, again under the auspices of the employment bureau, was hired later that same month at J. Wener Company in the same position at the same pay . What his reasons were for leaving is not explained in the ledgers, but further examination of the ledgers reveals others who had several jobs in short periods of time through the work of the employment bureau.[3] There will be more discussion of this mobility later in the paper.

In January, 1907, Max Fisch was looking for work again. He was one of three applicants the bureau sent to the Star Woolen Company at 565 Broadway which advertised for a bookkeeper at $8-10 a week. That he was sent might indicate that both the bureau and he thought him qualified for this job which would require more skills than his previous job. Such skills he could have gotten through night school courses at the YMHA. How much education Max had is unclear; a peer admired his "intensity and enthusiasm . . . to improve his education and fit himself for professional life. . . ." We have no record that he was enrolled in such courses, but his brother David received diplomas in both bookkeeping and stenography from the YMHA night school. Since the YMHA records are incomplete, it is possible that Max too was enrolled in such courses. Star Woolen hired none of the applicants, but in February Max was hired at G. Kleinbaum and Son, 49 East 9th Street, as a bookkeeper at $8 a week. He paid a $1.20 fee to the bureau. He continued to list Kamerling as his last employer. What this means is unclear. Kamerling could have been his only a reference since his apparent work time with the businesses after that had been so brief. Perhaps he never took any of the jobs between Kamerling and Kleinbaum but the payment of a fee for the Bleyer and Brothers position indicates that he had since the YMHA did not charge a fee apparently if the worker left before a stipulated time. By March he was looking for another job. Whether economic conditions were bad or Max was dissatisfied with employment at Kleinbaum is unknown, but he was one of five

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[3] See Employment Register [Sept. 1905] for the month of April, 1907.

candidates for a position as an office boy at $7 a week at Pearlstine and Rosenthal on 142 5th Avenue. Another of the candidates was hired, but he was still looking in April when he was hired at the Wearfine Company at 86 Bleecker Street at $10 or $12 a week as a bookkeeper. His jobfinding fee was $2; Kamerling was still listed as his last employer.

By July, 1907, he was applying for a new job. The YMHA records are unclear about Max at this point. He is listed as taking two jobs this month, one with M. Hilman Company on Prince Street near Greenwich Village and the other with the Japanese Silk Garment Company at 594 Broadway which was in the same vicinity. The Hilman Company wanted salesman and bookkeeper at $10 a week; the Silk Garment Company desired someone "bright and energetic" to be a bookkeeper. The pay, according to the records, was to be $15-25; it is unclear whether that was for a week or month, but the YMHA registers usually denoted when the pay was to be monthly. Unless this was a transcribing error (most bookkeeping jobs in the registers were listed at $8-12 a week) or a ploy on the part of the company to lure candidates (the YMHA agency sent nine applicants), this was an extraordinary salary. The registers disclose that Max took both jobs (the Garment job apparently paid much less than what the register initially listed) and paid fees for both. If this was so, it would be more evidence of the transient nature of work for young semiskilled men in the early part of this century or the uncertainty of economic conditions. The register record also indicates, in this case, the success of the employment bureau in finding jobs for those who came to it. On the other hand what the agency thought of young men like Max Fisch who moved from job to job was expressed in the YMHA Annual Report of 1912 when the supervisor of the employment bureau wrote that young men dissatisfied with their positions were interviewed, and in some cases directed to better jobs, but usually urged "to hold on to the positions they have" once differences had been smoothed over.[4] Whether such advice was given to Max is unknown

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[4] Year Book: Nineteen Hundred & Twelve containing 38th Annual Report And List of

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but he apparently stayed with the Japanese Silk Garment Company until sometime in 1908.

At this point his job career takes an interesting turn. He is listed as applying for a position in February, 1908, as an office assistant at Gutman Brothers at 452 Broadway which did not list a salary. The position was not filled with an applicant from the YMHA agency. However, over the next four months, the YMHA registers show that Max was hired at three jobs. Two were in April, one at E. Schleissner on Greenwich Street as a useful boy at $5 a week and at Argyle and Company on Walker Street as an office assistant at $7 a week. In these cases he was one of several candidates; he succeeded in obtaining both jobs and paid a fee for the Schleissner job. He left the Argyle position, the only time in his YMHA record that he was specifically listed as leaving a job. For the Schleissner job, he listed the Silk Garment Company as his last employer, meaning possibly that he had worked there longer than his previous jobs and had a reference which the YMHA usually asked employers to send to the employment agency so that they could keep track of the successful applicants.[5] In July he was employed through the bureau as an assistant bookkeeper at L. Baum and Company on Church Street at $8 a week, paying a fee of $1.60 and listing his last employer as Schleissner. After that the registers contain his name no more. David, however, is listed as finding work in August as an office boy at Hecht and Campe on Franklin Street at $6.

Members, Young Men's Hebrew Association, 13. The Annual Reports underwent several title changes. Hereafter Annual Reports will be the abbreviated title used, followed by the year in which the report was issued. The earlier quotations on Max's character are found in the *Monthly Bulletin*, December, 1911, 13.

[5] In the General Files for 1913 is a reference form for an employer to return to the agency. Some of questions are length of time knowing the applicant, term of employment, reason for leaving the business, competence of the employee and his position, his reliability, salary, and "would you consider h_____ worthy enough of confidence to recommend ____ for similar position?"

Given the transience of semiskilled workers, this is perhaps not so unique. The YMHA records are replete with the names of young men who appear only once. Yet since Max and his brother were members of the Association, following their lives has been a little easier. The next mention of Max, who is listed as an associate member from 1906 to 1910 and an active member in 1911 (meaning that he had turned twenty-one) is a notice of his death in the November, 1911, issue of the YMHA *Monthly Bulletin*. The next issue of the "Bulletin" contains an obituary. This is rather odd for a young man who never was mentioned in any YMHA records other than the employment registers and who achieved no considerable success. The praiseworthy comments in the *Bulletin* piece were written by Abraham Finkelstein who was the assistant superintendent of the YMHA and Falk Younker, the former Director and Executive Secretary of the YMHA. That a young man, just recently moving up in membership and trying to progress in life's struggle, would have such distinguished YMHA staff write of him might indicate that he was atypical of the thousands of young men and a few women who availed themselves of the employment bureau's services in the years prior to World War I or perhaps he was very illustrative of the many young men and women who wanted to achieve success. In many ways the journey of Max Fisch through various jobs through the help of the employment bureau was the saga of many young people during the early part of the twentieth century.[6]

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[6] The obituary appears in the "Monthly Bulletin, Young Men's Hebrew Association," December, 1911, 13. There is a further mystery about Max Fisch which may make him a little more atypical. Finkelstein wrote that Fisch was "overzealous" in trying to achieve his goals "which doubtless tended toward overtaxing his health." He died on October 19, 1911, but there is no death certificate for him in New York City files so he must have died outside the city. Steve Siegel, the archivist at the "Y" who has been so helpful in this project, speculates he might have been institutionalized for mental illness based on the flowery wording of the obituary. I think that this is possible but I also think that he might have been sent to a tuberculosis sanitarium where he passed away. This awaits further research.

The employment bureau that found Max Fisch positions was one of the first standing committees established when the Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York was founded in 1874. As the YMHA, organized for the "cultural and intellectual advancement of Jewish young men" according to Oscar Straus, moved from one site to another in the years prior to 1900, this committee operated on an irregular basis.[7] Jack Nadel, in his 75th anniversary history of the 92nd Street "Y", noted that an employment bureau was one of the many activities that the YMHA sponsored when a downtown branch on East Broadway opened in 1882 to help with the welfare of Russian Jewish immigrants crowding into the Lower East Side. The bureau was operated in conjunction with the United Hebrew Charities. It had two offices, one at 58 St. Mark's Place which was open one hour daily except Saturday and Sunday, and the other at 110 West 42nd with hours every day of the week except Saturday. The hours were limited except on Sunday when the agency was open 10 to 2. There was "No charge to Employers or Employees."[8] Prior to the move to 92nd and Lexington, the operation was apparently staffed with volunteers which would explain the restricted hours. The volunteer workers were possibly the members of the Employment Committee of which Levi Hershfield was the long-time chairman. The numbers of young men helped were not great: 63 in 1897, 86 in 1898, and 49 in 1899. The committee felt "[r]elieving boys and young men by securing them positions is beyond doubt, one of the highest orders of charity, most effective in its good results and lasting in its influence." The process of investigating the applicants' backgrounds was "arduous and trying" but there was little expense to the association.

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[7] The information on the early history of the YMHA of New York is taken from the Guide to the Archives of the 92nd Street "Y" and Jack Nadel, Building Character for 75 Years: 1874-1949, YM & YWHA, Published on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Young Men's & Young Women's Hebrew Association, New York City [New York, 1949]. The quote is from Nadel, 11.

[8] Nadel, 12; Employment Department, Employment Committee, General Files, 1882-1934, File for 1882. Hereafter referred to as General Files with the date of the file. Nadel's book and the General Files are found at the Archives of the 92nd Street "Y".

Apparently the cooperative effort with the United Hebrew Charities had been abandoned since the employment committee suggested a working agreement with the organization in the 1897 annual report. Such cooperation would "save much labor and useless expenditure of money and be of greater benefit to the applicants who apply for assistance." The desire to expand the service was evident in the commentary in the annual reports. The bureau would be better known to employers if circulars were sent to employers. With more money from the general YMHA budget, they could accomplish much more. No records of the types of jobs found for the applicants are available for this time nor any record about the applicants themselves or the companies that used the service. The 1897 annual report simply notes that 75% of the positions filled were clerks and office boys, positions very similar to those that Max Fisch would pursue later. These kinds of jobs, semiskilled and unskilled clerical work, would through the pre World War I years be the general kinds of jobs that the YMHA was able to find for its applicants.[9]

When Jacob Schiff provided the YMHA with a permanent edifice at the corner of 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue, the employment bureau apparently became a permanent operation of the association.[10] In the early part of the twentieth century, the employment bureau was but one of many activities that the 92nd "Y" organized. Americanization classes, English for foreigners, a library, lectures on Jewish topics, the celebration of Jewish holidays, athletic events, summer camps, and residence quarters for young men were just some of the numerous activities of this organization.[11] The move to the new facility not only enabled the YMHA to expand these offerings, but led to a

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[9] Annual Report [1897], 17, 26; Annual Report [1898], 21; Annual Report [1899], 16, 26.
[10] Guide to the Archives of the 92nd Street Y, n.p. The employment committee certainly thought the move would make a significant difference. In the 1899 annual report, it declared in "our new quarters, this branch of our activities can be extended and thus directly aid very many deserving young men in obtaining suitable employment." Annual Report [1899], 16.
[11] Nadel, 12-15.

tremendous increase in the work of the employment bureau. The employment committee, which apparently was doing much of the work of investigating the applicants before sending them to potential job positions, noted in 1901 that it "has been demonstrated . . . if we could offer greater facilities for bringing employer and employee together, larger numbers of our young men would have been provided employment. . . ."[12]

Through the pre World War I years the employment department followed this policy of trying to help as many young men (and a few women) as possible. The philosophy behind the bureau was diverse. William Mitchell, the superintendent of the YMHA and a supervisor of the bureau in the years before the war wrote in 1906 that helping a man before he was down and "to the brink" was "better and less expensive" than "to pauperize him" by making him a constant visitor to charity offices. By finding work for such a man he will become self-respecting and a contributing member to the community. [H]is wife will be enabled to stay at home to attend her household duties, [and] his children will be kept out of the hospitals or the children's court. . . ."[13] Others expressed their views without reference to family values. In 1904 the committee commended its work as indicating how helpful the YMHA agency had been in "helping others help themselves." The committee reiterated that in its 1906 report to the YMHA board. This bureau was "the highest type of philanthropic effort, inasmuch as it helps people to help themselves by procuring employment for them without violating their feelings of self-respect." Levi Hershfield, the chairman of the employment committee for many years, spoke eloquently of the bureau's mission in 1909. "There may be a question whether this is really our work but I maintain that when one views the number of boys and young men out of employment who seem at times utterly helpless as to the method of procuring a position [then] it would redound with credit to us" by helping them to be independent.[14]

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[12] Annual Report [1901], 20.
[13] Mitchell, "A Central Employment Bureau," *Monthly Bulletin*, November, 1906, 14.
[14] Annual Report [1904], 42; Annual Report [1906], 44; General Files, Employment

The philosophy behind the employment agency also included an expression of non-sectarianism. A 1906 advertising flyer declared that the "only restriction we place on applicants is that of respectability." The service was "distinctly nonsectarian and aims to help all deserving of its aid." In its 1909 report to the President of the YMHA, the employment committee praised the possibility of "a well-established Employment Bureau on a larger scale, without regard to religious affiliations." In 1902, the committee chairman stated that the services were "free to all, irrespective of sex, creed, or race, and we are glad to record that some non-Israelites have applied to us and we have succeeded in procuring them desirable situations."[15] How many non-Jews were helped is unclear as the records did not tally religious affiliations, but the expression of nonsectarianism was apparently characteristic of other Jewish institutions as well including the Hebrew Free Loan Society.[16] Whether other employment agencies had such provisions is unknown.

Those involved in the bureau's work saw its value and frequently urged an expansion of its efforts. In 1901 the committee declared that the results of its work justified asking for a larger allocation of YMHA money for their volunteer efforts. There was discussion of expanding the bureau by opening branches in other parts of the city, either under the auspices of the YMHA or in conjunction with other Hebrew organizations. When the United Hebrew Charities stopped operating its employment agency in 1907, more applicants than the YMHA could handle tried to register with the

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Committee Minutes [July 1909]. Hershfield as far as I can ascertain was the chairman from 1897 through at least 1915. Several other YMHA members also spent time on the committee. The most distinguished of all of the committee members was the Rev. Dr. Judah L. Magnes who served at least one year in 1913-1914. Annual Report[1914], 2. The policy of the YMHA also emphasized treating applicants with respect and courtesy when they visited the bureau to look for work. See for example Annual Report[1906], 44. The Hebrew Free Loan Society also emphasized this treatment of clients. See footnote 16.

[15] General Files [1906]; Annual Report [1909], 16; Annual Report [1902], 33.

[16] Jenna Weissman Joselit, Lending Dignity (New York: The Hebrew Free Loan Society, 1992), 48-52. There are numerous references throughout this book to the courtesy shown borrowers. See pages 2-3.

employment bureau. In that year 4338 applicants registered, "most of whom [the agency] had no hope or expectation of placing. . . ." William Mitchell in 1910 stated clearly that the YMHA wanted to expand the bureau "still further."[17]

The work of the bureau did expand in the prewar years. In 1900 the committee through its volunteer efforts found work for 78 of the 142 applicants; only 68 actually took the job s offered as ten refused for unspecified reasons to take the positions offered. Three years later with an expenditure of $91.07 (up from $4.50 in 1900), 249 young men were placed in various jobs. In 1903 the bureau became a separate department with its own appointed head. The committee noted that with a "large number of desirable applicants enrolled on our books we have little difficulty in filling positions offered to us." When the recession of 1907 occurred and the number of companies offering positions decreased, the agency was still able to place more young men and a few women than in the year prior to the economic decline. With the end of the recession, the number of applicants, the number of job vacancies offered, and the number of positions filled continued to grow. In 1908 a total of 494 new applicants registered with the agency while companies offered 810 job vacancies. More than 700 of these positions were filled through the YMHA agency. Two years later, 1073 new applicants registered with companies offering 2161 vacancies of which 1310 were filled under the auspices of the YMHA. In 1916, as the European war generated more American jobs, the number of new applicants had grown to 2352 with job vacancies offered at 2477 and 1857 of the positions filled. This increase was rather remarkable given the general prosperity. The employment secretary noted that there was a "universal lack of young boys seeking employment." These boys, who were the traditional ones seeking the help of the YMHA, were either

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[17] Annual Report [1901], 41; Mitchell, "Central Bureau," 14; Annual Report[1908], 12, 13; Mitchell, "Development of Y.M.H.A. Work in the Past Decade: The Employment Bureau," *Monthly Bulletin*, October, 1910, 16.

working in the ammunition plants, some as young as fourteen being employed in those factories, or staying in school which had evolved as a goal of the employment agency.[18]

The increase in the numbers of young men and women using the agency led to this evolution in the mission of the agency. In 1911 the agency created a Bureau of Vocational Guidance. The purpose was to better help the young men fill their positions and work out any differences they might have with their employer. These goals evolved apparently toward keeping the young men in school and developing their skills so they would be more marketable. An article in the *Monthly Bulletin* of March 1915 observes that the agency's goals included more than just helping those unemployed find work. The vocational guidance plan, partially formulated because less than 10% of the young men had any training for an occupation, would involve the employment bureau in encouraging the young men to attend night school and belong to the YMHA as a way of developing their skills and their character. At an Employment Committee meeting on May 28, 1914, the chair, Levi Hershfield, discussed the program "to interest boys and parents in continuing the former's education as long as possible, by going to high school and where the economic reason interposes itself, to assist the boy to some after school employment." That there was some success in this plan was evident in the annual report of 1914 when the chairman observed that "those whom we place hold their positions longer and receive better compensation" and that some had been influenced to go to night school and fifty of 300 followed by the YMHA superintendent "had been induced to go back to school." The agency had also worked with "one of the largest public schools in the city," possibly PS 62, in an effort to convince the students to stay in school to receive "an adequate training before [they] enter . . . the life struggle, and occasionally, where the economic stress is not too great, we succeed in having him continue his education during the day." A file of

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[18] Annual Report[1900], 23; Mitchell, "Development," 16; Annual Report[1904], 16, 42; Annual Report[1911], 14; *Monthly Bulletin*, March, 1917, 16, 32.

trade schools was available for those who wanted training for future work and the YMHA library was open in the morning so applicants could scan the newspaper job advertisements and receive advice on writing letters of application. The bureau aimed "to be more than a placefinder for boys too helpless or ignorant to help themselves." The goal of the bureau had been altered and expanded. While it continued to find jobs for young men and women, it was hoping to build more self-reliance and character as well as stimulated the applicants to acquire a useful skill that would serve them well in the future. Harry L. Glucksman, the assistant superintendent in charge of the bureau in 1915, described the significance of these modifications in the agency's outlook. The function of the bureau was to develop "the character of the boy" so that he understands that work is "the basis of his economic independence and success." In reducing the many who had no skill or occupation that would help them in the future, the agency was resolving not only "a broad community question, but specifically Jewish, as we can not have a healthy Jewish community if there is an overwhelming number of our fellows who are constantly involved in an intense economic struggle because of lack of training and knowledge." The bureau was evolving into more than a job placement agency. It was, in a small way trying to educate the Jewish community about the needs for the future, in effect engaging in preventive medicine in hopes of diminishing future disillusionment in the community of workers.[19]

Just as the expansion in the numbers of applicants led to significant changes in the philosophy of the employment agency, it stimulated staff growth and increased expenditures for the bureau. As mentioned earlier, volunteers did the work of investigating the backgrounds of the applicants and the service had been free to the young men. The

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[19] Annual Report [1912], 13; *Monthly Bulletin* (March, 1915), 8; General Files, Employment Committee, Minutes [1914-1915], May 28, 1914; Annual Report [1914], 8, 9; Harry L. Glucksman, "The Employment Bureau n the Y.M.H.A.," *Monthly Bulletin* (March, 1915), 34.

greater numbers of young men seeking jobs led to the appointment of a bureau head in 1903 and the assignment of a YMHA office assistant to work with the agency by 1906 and possibly earlier. By 1909, the employment secretary, Emil Kuper, was expected to work from 8 to 6, Monday through Thursday, with "leave for meals," eight to twelve on Fridays, and Saturday and Sunday from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 11 p.m.. His assistants were to start at 7:30. Even at this time with increasing numbers seeking jobs (there were 1033 registered applicants in 1909) through the bureau, the secretary, who was expected to visit businesses to ascertain their needs, worked only part time for the bureau; he had other responsibilities at the YMHA as well. In 1914 the bureau still had only part time employees other than the secretary: his assistant, another assistant with other responsibilities, an errand boy, and a stenographer. This was little different from 1910 when the secretary was full time and had an assistant, a stenographer, and "Extra Help" which was not defined. Apparently by 1914 the secretary's salary had been considered part of the general YMHA budget rather than to be taken from the employment bureau budget.[20]

That the bureau had a budget also reflected a change. In1907 the agency began to charge applicants a registration fee of $.25 and a portion of the first week's salary for candidates who found positions through the bureau. No charge was placed on employers. The YMHA initiated the change for several reasons. The board had decided that each department should bear a portion of its cost of operating, especially since the agency had always operated at a loss. The board also believed that better candidates would register to "the exclusion of the triflers." Members who used the job service like Max Fisch would pay only 20% of their first week's salary while nonmembers would pay a third. Apparently this percentage remained unchanged in the years up to World War I. In addition the

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[20] Mitchell, "Development," 16; Annual Report[1906], 17; General Files [1909]; Record-Committee Meeting Minutes- 1908-1913, October 25, 1908, 8, September 30, 1910, 127; Employment Committee Minutes [1914-1915], May 28, 1914; Annual Report[1911, 14.

charges at the YMHA bureau were less than those at other employment agencies in the city. As for why employers were not to be charged for this service which many were increasingly using, the president simply noted in his report for 1907 that "[w]e have not yet deemed it wise to make a charge to employers."[21]

The impact of the charge is hard to ascertain from the figures. Certainly the expenditures of the agency rose and the receipts rarely covered the expenses. As a matter of fact, the first three years of the fees produced larger deficits than the previous years when a fee was not charged. If prospects left their job before a certain time, a fee was not charged as was seen with Max Fisch. The bureau sometimes had trouble collecting the fees. The few extant committee minutes contain suggestions of sending letters to delinquent young men, "hinting that the employer's attention will be called to the matter if no satisfaction is obtained." Other factors precluded payment including that many of the boys were too poor to pay the fees or one year Passover festivities had slowed the collection of fees. Even in 1913, though, the expenses were greater than the receipts, and the deficit continued to be greater than any year prior to the implementation of the fee. However, more young men and women were finding jobs under this new system, 2005 in 1913 compared to 505 in 1906.[22]

In spite of the good work being done by the bureau, there were some problems. Some of these tensions involved employees. In 1910 "Sol Levene who had been employed in this department as an assistant had been dismissed at Mr. Warburg's [the President of the YMHA] instruction, for insubordination." Raising the efficiency of the bureau was a frequent complaint in the committee meetings. In 1909 the committee worried that the bureau had fallen behind in its work and asked the employment secretary to restore its

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[21] Annual Report[1907], 9,14, 15; Mitchell, "Development," 16; Committee Meeting-1908-1913, September 30, 1910, 127.
[22] Mitchell, "Development," 16;Committee Meeting 1908-1913, February 19, 1911, 145, April 9, 1911, 157; Annual Report [1914], 9.

efficiency. In the same meetings part of the problem may have been revealed when the committee passed a resolution that the employment assistant "shall be required to work the full six days of the week otherwise a new man is to be engaged" and noted that the stenographer had resigned, after his YMHA salary had recently been increased, to work in private business.[23] One young assistant was more fortunate. He asked for a pay raise in 1912 since he "had performed my duties as earnestly and faithfully as [he] could" and no one had been displeased with his work. The chairman of the employment committee scribbled in the margin of his letter, "Raise him 50[cents] a week from Aug 15/12."[24]

One of the largest concerns was that the bureau could be doing more and didn't receive credit for what it did do. The employment committee in its 1901 report to the YMHA president declared its hopes of reaching more employers. Three years later the committee was pleased to relate that their work had "a substantial hold on the community." In 1906 the employment committee had "succeeded in attracting a very large clientele, many of whom come to us before seeking other channels." This optimism was tempered by concerns that more could be done if more money was available and that the community did not know enough about the agency's work. At one committee meeting in 1909, members suggested that contacting the *New York Times* to do a story on the bureau would be one way to achieve more publicity for the agency's efforts. Levi Hershfield complained in the same year at another meeting that the bureau was performing "work of the best kind" in "securing [young men] work and making them independent," but there were a "great number of skeptics who claim we [the YMHA] are a social club doing some religious work." The bureau needed to "bring our Association forcibly to the minds of the great business world" and promote the extent and nature of their contribution to the community. The limits of the YMHA agency were made clear in the 1908 annual report.

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[23] Committee Meeting 1908-1913, January 27, 1910, 86, February 3, 1909, 24, November 16, 1909, 74.
[24] General Files[1912].

The United Hebrew Charities had discontinued their employment bureau, thus making the YMHA "one of the few bureaus connected with communal institutions engaged in assisting Jewish applicants seeking work." Attributing the significant increase in job applicants to the demise of the UHC agency, the YMHA agency had 4338 applicants register, including a "large number of unskilled foreign workmen. . . ." Due to a lack of funds and that the bureau had calls "only for positions requiring English speaking young men," the agency had "no hope or expectation" of placing these men whom the "charitable agencies from all parts of the city" sent to the YMHA. Most of the applicants "wasted their own as well as our time in registering. If we could possibly do anything for these people we should be only too willing." Thus even as the number of young men and women whom the bureau helped was increasing, the men of employment committee were concerned that their work was unappreciated while they firmly believed that more needed to be done.[25] Whether the tone of the remarks was indicative of a clash between 'Uptown' and 'Downtown' Jews is uncertain, but it would seem that the tone was a result of the frustrating inability to do more when they were aware of the tremendous need of their services.[26]

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[25] Annual Report[1901], 36; Annual Report[1904], 15; Annual Report[1906], 44; Committee Meeting 1908-1913, February 3, 1909, 24; General Files, Employment Committee Minutes, June, 1909; Annual Report[1908], 11-13. Why the United Hebrew Charities closed its employment agency is unclear from the information I have. With more time, I could investigate the closure of this bureau. The reference to "Jewish applicants" does not mean that the bureau was exclusively for those of the Hebrew faith. More likely the reference refers to the fact that most of the applicants were Jewish.

[26] For more on the clash of 'Uptown' and 'Downtown' Jews, see Moses Rischin, The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 95-111, 235-239, and Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 229-235. For a somewhat different view of the clash, see Arthur Goren, New York Jews And the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1-24.

The solution often proposed in YMHA literature and its annual reports other than the expansion of the YMHA service discussed earlier was the creation of a central employment bureau. Although the President of the YMHA in 1907 broached the subject of an endowment for the bureau, possibly coming from "philanthropists who are glad to help every effort wherever made for the betterment of our people," the major push for improvement in helping young people find jobs was establishing a central employment agency. In an article that appeared in the monthly bulletin of the YMHA in November, 1906, William Mitchell, the superintendent of the YMHA, forcefully presented the idea. The major agencies, all free at this time, were found at the YMHA, the Emmanuel Sisterhood, and the East Side Employment Bureau, operated by Bnai Brith and funded by the United Hebrew Charities "before it was dissolved" which had worked with "mainly newly arrived immigrants" (he does not mention the Industrial Removal Office which had been founded in 1900). The current bureaus had performed good work, but were "only scratching the surface." There were other smaller societies associated with other communal institutions but no agency specifically focused on finding jobs for those who were seeking them. If a free employment association with a main office in the "lower section of the city" with branches located in the numerous "Jewish institutions" were established, more good work could accomplished in helping job seekers and there would be a better use of the funds now being expended. Mitchell calculated that the current expenditure of $10000 by the existing agencies was a "waste of time, money and energy" when a central bureau would be more efficient and spend less money. His proposed central employment would have departments, "one to look after the needs of female applicants, another for males and a third and most important for special cases." This latter division would work to find jobs for immigrants and "for those who are physically or mentally incapable of competing with sturdier, better educated, and better equipped applicants." Mitchell thought this was a "great opportunity for the wise and farseeing philanthropist" to either fund a consolidation of the different agencies or designate one "to conduct this

work and bring it to fruition." Mitchell was sure that great benefits would result from such an effort. What impact Mitchell's article had is unclear. The annual report of 1908 mentions the possibility of founding branches throughout the city, but then declares it is the business of the philanthropists to pursue this.[27] However, in the next year, some action was apparently taken.

The annual report of 1909 expressed the desire of the YMHA that the founding of an "Employment Bureau on a larger scale, without regard to religious affiliations," which apparently was under consideration by "some of our philanthropic citizens" would become a reality. Employers would be "glad" to employ young men whom such organizations had "investigated" and "shown . . . to be worthy." This hope apparently was only partially met with the establishment of a national employment office in Battery Park in which Jacob Schiff had an interest. At a committee meeting in 1909, the members discussed the new agency and noted that it catered to unskilled manual workers, most of whom were foreigners. The new bureau was uninterested in any other kind of labor. Since the YMHA bureau tended to fill positions for unskilled and a semi-skilled clerical labor, this new agency did not directly compete with YMHA bureau. The committee urged that the YMHA then should open a branch "in the heart of the business section somewhere near Broadway between Canal Street and Astor place." This would save time for both employers and job applicants since most of the openings that the YMHA had were in this area rather than in the Lexington Avenue neighborhood, and locating a bureau downtown would enable the YMHA agency to supply "mechanical help such as tailors, operators, etc., which we cannot do at present." This revealed what some thought was a shortcoming of the YMHA agency that being on Lexington Avenue was too far from where the positions were and that only a slender portion of the working community, mostly clerical

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[27] Annual Report[1907], 15; Mitchell, "Central Bureau," 14-15; Annual Report [1908], 13.

workers was being helped by the agency. Although the President's report for 1910 voiced support for affiliating with the National Employment Bureau, created in 1909, The YMHA agency apparently continued to develop its own new programs such as the vocational guidance plan and emphasizing the importance of education. The numbers of job seekers continued to grow as did the number of vacancies filled under the aegis of the agency. In 1915, Harry Glucksman, the assistant superintendent n charge of the YMHA bureau could write that the association anticipated expanding "our field of activity by establishing a downtown branch, so we may be more easily accessible to some of the applicants and to most of the employers." The bureau had expanded but some of its dreams were yet to be achieved.[28]

By the time of World War I, the bureau was successful in the numbers of job seekers being aided, but the hope of a central agency or even a downtown branch had not been accomplished. There was a clear sense of frustration when they could not aid many of the applicants due to lack of funds or that their job listings required young boys or English speakers. The employment committee realized the importance of what they were doing. They spoke of the warm feeling in the community about their work while agonizing that more could be known about it and how could greater publicity be achieved. The two committee budgets extant reveal that $150 in 1910 and $75 in 1914 had been spent on advertising. In neither year was that a substantial portion of the budget. Yet the budget figures for printing, postage, and the telephone in those years probably reflect some advertising and contacts with employers and job seekers. A 1906 flyer from the employment bureau declares that the agency is operated for the benefit of employers and employees and urges the use of the YMHA service for "competent help."[29] From the

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[28] Annual Report[1909], 16; General Files, Employment Committee Minutes [June, 1909]; Annual Report[1910], 19; Glucksman, "Employment Bureau," 34. I am uncertain what the National Employment Bureau did other than what is mentioned in the YMHA records. It may be the employment agency of the Kehillah. See Goren, 69, 212.
[29] Committee Meeting 1908-1913, September 30, 1910, 127; Employment Committee

perspective of the committee, there was a certain feeling of success in the new programs developed, the nonsectarian nature of the service, and the sympathetic and courteous aspects of their agency. The annual reports and other YMHA sources emphasize this and the acknowledgment of the poverty of some of the job seekers: in 1914, "we did not collect commissions at all, or made substantial reductions whenever the economic straits of the family demanded it."[30] From the perspective of the committee the YMHA had accomplished much. The viewpoint of the young men and the companies, although difficult to ascertain, probably would sustain the belief that the YMHA service had been of some benefit.

The archives of the 92nd Street "Y" contain a number of resources that might help us to examine the companies and young men who used the bureau's services. In addition to the annual reports, a few remaining copies of committee minutes, and the monthly bulletins, the archives at the "Y" contain ledger books from 1905 through 1930 that are records of the applicants who found jobs and the employers who sought help from the employment bureau. The information varies in the ledgers, but frequently the name, age, and address of the applicant, his previous job (most applicants were young men), the work desired, the name and address of the company that hired him are listed in clear, precise penmenship. In addition, fees paid by the young men to the YMHA for the service are listed. These records comprise a wealth of material of considerable benefit to historians. Although some gaps and omissions exist, I used the information described above to examine the types of work young Jewish men were pursuing, what kinds of companies were looking for workers and the types of workers they wanted. Much of the following analysis is based on an examination of the Employment Register of [the] YMHA of NY,

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Minutes [1914-1915].
[30] Annual Report[1915], 8.

Sept. 1905-December 1908, the Employment Register (Vacancies): YMHA of NY, May 1906-July 1910, and the Employer's Ledger: Employment Bureau Agency Y.M.H.A. [March 1913-October 1915].[31]

The companies that used the YMHA services were a diverse group. In April, 1907, the companies seeking workers included Tushnett Brothers, a jeweler; an exporter, Isaac Lehman; J. Goldwater, a men's outfitter; Davis and Company, a cigar business; Strauss Company, a dry goods firm; Toch Paint Supply Company (Henry Toch was a long-time YMHA board member), and S. J. Hyman who had what must have been a rather unique business in ostrich feathers. Some companies during this time appear frequently in the YMHA records. D. Jones and Sons, a shirt house, on Broadway below Union Square often used the agency. In July, 1908, the company sought to fill twelve openings for "useful boys," stock boys, and what was described as "generally useful." J.A. Simon Company on Greene Street was another frequent advertiser at the YMHA. Most of the businesses, as the YMHA employment committee knew, were not in the neighborhood of the YMHA. An examination of the locations of the companies that took workers from the YMHA agency for the period September-December, 1905 indicates that the three largest concentrations were in the area between Broadway and west Broadway, on Broadway below Union Square, and on the East Side. By April of 1914, the location of the companies seeking workers had changed somewhat. By far the largest concentration of companies was on the West Side between 14th and 40th Streets, followed by the same streets on the East Side. A substantial number of companies also were still found on Broadway below Union Square. At neither time were there many companies from the Lower East Side, Jewish Harlem, or the area around the YMHA on Lexington, confirming the comments of committee members about where the jobs were. That many of these

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[31] All of the information in the following paragraphs is taken from these three sources. I did not have time to discover the nature of the company businesses in 1914.

companies were Jewish-owned is obvious from the company names. Yet whether the National Veal Company needing a bookkeeper with a $2000 bond or the Thompson Company, advertising for a stock boy, for their clothing business were Jewish-owned is unclear.

The companies were generally seeking a particular kind of worker. It is clear that the agency specialized in finding positions for young boys and teenagers. The bureau reported in 1905 that obtaining jobs "for old men or for laborers" was somewhat problematic, but "for office boys, bookkeepers, clerks, stenographers, typewriters and errand boys" the agency had little trouble at all. "We find that most employers who seek our aid expect us to furnish young people only." Whether this was to pay lower wages or the jobs were more suitable as entry level positions is unclear from the evidence; The companies were looking for youth. The employment registers for the early years reflect this bias. In May 1906 H. Katz and Brother on Amsterdam Avenue advertised for a "useful boy" (which is never defined in the records but was probably a job description for a variety of physical and simple clerical duties), "16-18 yrs." In June of the same year Block Folding and Trucking Company listed a job for an office boy for $3.50 a week, "14-15." That age might make difference in salary is possibly evident in the $10 a week that Mitchell and Gross on Greene Street offered for a stock clerk position, "20-22," in June of 1907. In September, 1905, the median age of the fifty-eight boys who found jobs through the agency was sixteen; only eight of them were older than seventeen. The figures were little different for April, 1907. The median age of the forty-seven successful job candidates was eighteen. Rare were men over thirty like Maurice Cohen, age 39 and described as "poor," who was hired as a porter at the American Pneumatic Carpet Cleaning Company at $9 per week in that same month. The problem of age and, to certain extent the lack of skills, was evident in the observation of the committee in 1911 that the "greatest difficulty is experienced in placing the young man who has no particular calling, but, according to his age and requirements is obliged to earn from seven to twelve dollars," a figure that

only seventy two of the 361 candidates placed in jobs in the month of January for the years 1909, 1910, and 1911 had achieved.[32]

The young men the companies were seeking did not need well-developed skills. For example in 1905, of the 207 positions filled, 68 were for errand boys, 49 for office boys, 22 for stock clerks, and 15 for assistant bookkeepers. With the exception of the bookkeepers and stenographers, none of the positions could be considered highly skilled labor. This was little changed for the year 1913. A total of 2005 positions were filled under the auspices of the YMHA bureau. Of that number, 438 were errand boys, 248 were office boys, 282 were "useful boys", and 216 were "General Assistants." Only the 86 bookkeepers, 48 stenographers, one foreman, one machinist, and one draftsman were possibly more than semiskilled. An examination of all of the job seekers hired from 1900 to 1913 reveals that these figures are usually the same for all of the years with only the definitions of the jobs changing, for example from "useful boy" to "generally useful." The tutors, law clerks, electrician, machinist, iron worker, plumber, piano player, photographer, "Pressman-Foreman," "Probation Officer," baker, carpenters, and tailors are notable for their rarity in the YMHA files. The agency primarily was asked to find young men and women who would work as semiskilled or unskilled clerical labor with some light physical activities.[33]

One example of the status of these positions was the level of pay. The monthly publication of the YMHA in May, 1907, reported that 47 applicants secured employment

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[32] Annual Report [1905], 18, 47. Only toward the war years do positions such as bookkeeper and stenographer which many people associate traditionally with women begin to be filled by women through the agency's efforts; even then most of those positions still went to men. Employment (Vacancies) [May 1906]; Employment Register [September 1905]. After this register which runs through December, 1908, the ages of the applicants are not listed. Annual Report [1911], 11.

[33] The information not in the ledgers was found in Annual Report [1905], 48-49 and Annual Report[1914], 9-10. Each Annual Report from 1900 to 1914 lists the jobs found for applicants, and this is how I compiled the figures on the types of jobs that were filled.

through the efforts of the employment committee. The employment register reveals that 212 men had applied for help. A total of 66 companies had listed vacancies with the bureau, some more than once. Of the 47 successful applicants, most found clerical jobs where the weekly wages ranged from to $4 to $9 for most jobs, but one bookkeeper, a job obviously requiring a little more skill and education, was paid $15 a week. The Monthly Bulletin for May, 1907, declared that a total of $321.50 or an average of $6.84 per individual was "thus put into circulation." The annual report for 1911 revealed that the overwhelming majority of weekly wages for the workers were six dollars or below a week and that for the years 1908, 1909, and 1910, the average per capita weekly salary was $5.42, $5.66, and $5.87 respectively. Considering that those are years when the country was coming out of the recession of 1907 and that transportation costs might consume fifty or sixty cents of that every week, the wages do not seem very high and confirm the worries of the YMHA board that young men in these jobs might have little future without education and the ability to obtain the higher paying jobs. Prosperity did not mean constantly rising pay as in 1911, the average per capita weekly wage was $5.73, $6.18 in 1912, and $6.25 in 1913. This yearly average masks monthly fluctuations. A chart in the 1917 annual report notes that average weekly pay was over $6.50 in August 1914, but only $5.75 in May. The year 1915 was even more fluctuating. The average in July 1915 was less than $5.25, but over $6.50 in November, the war probably being a factor in that rise. By 1916 the weekly wage of those using the service had risen to $7.50. How this compared with other wages of the time is uncertain, but probably in some ways the wages were lower than those found among skilled workers in the garment trades. Susan Glenn in Daughters of the Shtetl notes that in Chicago in 1907 and 1908, fourteen year old male shop workers in men's clothing earned $3.34 a week, but seventeen and eighteen year olds

earned $6.88 and $7.22 respectively. The fears of the YMHA about future poverty of those it was helping were probably justified.[34]

What qualities did employers desire for these kinds of jobs at those levels of pay? Physical strength was often a characteristic requested. In May 1906, Bauman and Sperling on East 14th were willing to pay $5 a week for an errand boy, "Strong and willing." The E.I. Samuels Company on Lafayette hired Louis Friedman (or Freedman) in July 1907 for $6 a week after advertising for a "strong and husky" boy. Intelligence and appearance were other attributes that employers requested. Remember that the Japanese Silk Garment Company had hired Max Fisch in July, 1907 after calling for a bookkeeper to be "bright and energetic." Bernard Levy on lower 5th Avenue, a frequent user of the YMHA service, asked for an errand boy, "smart and of good appearance." Trustworthiness was another characteristic that some employers valued. Konijn, Frank ,and Shire on Nassau Street wanted an "Honest boy" for their diamond import business in May, 1906. Skills or experience requests reflect the kinds of jobs that the YMHA service was able to find for its job hopefuls: clerical and light physical labor of an unskilled or semiskilled nature. Companies asked for applicants with "Knowledge of shipping," "Knowledge of geography" (for a shipping clerk whom the Ullman Manufacturing Company on East 59th, a frequent user of the YMHA agency, would pay $8 a week, a solid salary in 1906), "Artistic," "Double entry" for a job opening for a bookkeeper, "Quick at figures" for an office assistant at J. Wener [Weiner?] on lower Broadway, another frequent employer of YMHA job applicants, "Knowledge of Russia" for a shipping clerk whom the Boston Shipping Company on Norfolk hired from the Lower East Side, one of the few boys from that area who used the YMHA service, and "one who can typewrite." Sometimes

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[34] *Monthly Bulletin*,(May 1907), 10; Annual Report[1911], 11, 14; Annual Report[1912], 13; Annual Report[1913], 8; Annual Report[1914], 9; Annual report[1917], 16, 20; Susan Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1990), 119.

experience was not needed. The business of Levi Hershfield ,the chairman of the YMHA employment committee once asked for an errand boy who "may be greenhorn." The difference in pay that skills could make was evident in two notations in the ledgers. In August, 1906, Julius Cohen on Williams Street asked for an office boy, "$4 or $7 type," indicating that a skill could substantially increase one's pay and justifying the night school courses that the YMHA encouraged young boys to take in order to improve their skills and chances for increased earnings. The other notation in September, 1907, indicates the limits of the YMHA's operations and the worries that companies only came to them with lower paying jobs. Joe Silverberg filled the position of "Cutter" at the J.Diamond Company on Church Street which had requested "must be first class experienced on cloaks." The pay of $16 a week was very good, but the ledgers note that Silverberg was discharged the same month. No reason was given, but this was a rare example of a nonclerical job being advertised in the YMHA register. Possibly Silverberg did not meet the demands of the company in his skill level. Some companies stated that learning a trade or advancement was possible. "Good chance," "Advancement," "Learn dentistry," "To learn business (butter and eggs)," and "apprentice to learn mirror trade" were some of the comments that companies made when they were looking for employees.

Other requests reflect religious or ethnic concerns. A few businesses stated there would be "No Sabbath work." One company asked for a Christian employee to work on the Jewish Sabbath. Such notations about Sabbath work were infrequent. Ethnic stipulations were just as rare. "American," "read English and honest," "foreigner," "must speak Bohemian or Polish," and the Industrial Removal Office's request for an office boy who could "Read and write Jewish" were just a few of the ethnic requests. Rarely did the YMHA service fill jobs that required speaking a foreign language.

Some requests were rather interesting and unique. The Freundschaft Club on 72nd and Park wanted a useful boy "For Billiard room" in January, 1906. The Agency was able to find Isaac Beckerman who had been working on the Lower East Side to fill the job at

$8 a week. One gentleman asked for a "boy to read paper for old man & take him to office." The job was not filled through the YMHA. L. Mane and Company of lower Broadway advertised for someone to "carry samples for salesman," "sample[s] are not heavy." Joseph Berger of Orchard Street was hired a $5 a week, but left before paying a fee to the YMHA. Perhaps the samples were heavier than the company stated. Alsberg Morris and Company of Waverly Place wanted a "boy for poultry farm," "experienced." The YMHA ledgers note that a Hyman Cohen, 17, filled the job in August, 1907, but the records also state that he was hired later that month as a "Hall-Boy" at Mt. Sinai Hospital after working at the Dr. Bell's Tooth Powder Company. Perhaps the farm was less appealing than the hospital.[35]

Most companies were apparently satisfied with the YMHA service. The increase in the number of positions that the agency offered in the years prior to World War I and the number of companies that continued to use the bureau repeatedly are indications of this. The *Monthly Bulletin* of December, 1908, published two letters of praise for the services of the YMHA bureau declaring "we have no hesitancy in recommending . . . when in need of help . . . the employment department of the Young Men's Hebrew Association." Of course a YMHA publication could hardly be expected to publish negative comments about its operations, but the letters do indicate a degree of satisfaction. The ledgers, however, indicate occasionally that the applicants or the agency were not pleasing to all clients. The O'Lion and Company on Spring Street saw six candidates in February, 1909 and hired none. Someone wrote in the ledger, "Applicants not satisfactory." The New Style Press in May, 1910, saw three candidates from the YMHA. Apparently not pleased with these

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[35] All of this information and the comments are taken from Employment (Vacancies) [May1906] and Employment Register [September 1906]. The references can be found under the months listed in the text. As far as I can tell the Vacancies ledger is the only one with comments like this. The information in the next paragraph is also from the above ledger.

young men, the company hired none and someone wrote in the ledger, "Filled by another agency."

What we know about the young men and women who used the service is limited but the ledgers do reveal some interesting information from which we can make some tentative observations. In September of 1905 of the 58 young men who found jobs through the YMHA twenty-three lived on the East Side above 40th Street and 20 in Harlem; the remainder lived scattered in Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, the Bronx, and other parts of the city. Most of those who found jobs (47) in April, 1907, lived on the East Side above 40th Street (15) or in Harlem (12) which I have tentatively described as above 100the Street on the East Side and above 120th on the West Side although eleven of the young men lived on the Lower East Side (Forsyth, Henry, Ludlow, Canal, and Rivington were a few of the Lower East Side streets). Yet, the "Y" was clearly drawing most of the successful applicants from the "uptown" Jews. The figures had changed only somewhat by 1914 which is a little surprising since the movement of Jewish population away from the Lower East Side had already begun. Of 109 successful job applicants in April, 1914, thirty-seven lived in Harlem, nine in the Bronx, five in Brooklyn, and thirteen on the East Side between Houston and 14th. What was revealing was that twenty-three of the applicants lived on the Lower East Side including a B. Blum who resided at 90 Orchard Street, the site of the office of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum today. Further study will have to determine if this was an aberration for this particular month or whether the YMHA was having greater success in expanding its services. There is no indication that the agency was registering anyone other than English-speaking applicants so most certainly, the majority of these men and women were second-generation whose families had chosen to stay on the Lower East Side or it was the only area they could afford.[36]

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[36] The information in this paragraph comes from the previously mentioned ledgers in footnote 36 and the Employer's Ledger[March 1913].

Applicants did not get jobs for any number of reasons. For a brief period in 1909, someone in the employment bureau listed the reasons occasionally why applicants were unsuccessful. Some of the factors would not be uncommon today. As discussed previously some job seekers were simply not qualified. "Applicants did not know enough about lace" was the reason that Louis Strauss and Company hired no useful boys in February, 1909. "Employed one of his relatives," "old boy came back," "Took brother in employ," and "Took brother of one of employees" indicate that familiarity played a role in acquiring a job. Other times the hopeful candidate was "Too late" or "Could not get application."

Candidates often left jobs. The Monthly Bulletin of May, 1907, page 10, declared that the department had been of "great value to the community." Yet the ledgers reveal that of the 47 men placed, four of them were in temporary jobs and twenty were listed as "Left." Only one of those listed paid a fee to the YMHA. One job seeker, after finding a job with the Diamond Soda Water Company as a driver at $9 a week was "Discharged." The ledgers do not reveal the reason for leaving or dismissal. Possibly the distance between work and home might have contributed. Most of the companies seeking employees this month were located along West Broadway and Broadway below Union Square, the West Side below 40th Street, and the Lower East Side. Of the twenty-one workers who left or were dismissed, ten, in a very preliminary examination, lived substantial distances from their place of work. Since the records reveal no reason for the failure to remain, this observation will always be tentative, but an examination of the transportation available at the time might lend more credence to this opinion. In addition, if the fare for the elevated trains and subways was a nickel each way, then considering the majority of these young men were making on average $6.84 per week and worked five or six days a week, their transportation costs could consume 7 to 9% of the average weekly salary. However, many of the jobs were as office boys, office assistants, or "useful boys." Their pay was rarely higher than $5 a week so 10 to 12% of their pay might be taken in transportation costs. These, as I maintained earlier, are very conjectural conclusions. The

employment ledgers for early 1909 do list occasionally why workers left. Transportation is not given but the other reasons are illuminating and may explain why job mobility was seemingly common among the semi-skilled and unskilled. M. Liebholz of University Place wanted a "Learner" for $3 a week, but the employment bureau noted that he "Could not get fellow for $3.00." One company asked for a stenographer/office assistant for $5 a week. Again the pay was tool low: "Could not get stenographer for that salary." L. Hirschkowitz left his job with the Greenberg-Miller Company, and the employment bureau noted, "Left. Work too hard." Abe Isaacs on the Bowery could not hire anyone for "generally useful" since the three "Applicants [were] not sat[isfied] with the hours." Consequently pay, hours, difficulty of work, and possibly transportation problems could contribute to frequent job turnover.[37]

The mobility of Max Fisch was duplicated by some of his peers whom he may have known as they were persistent customers at the YMHA agency.[38] Such mobility could be lateral in terms of finding jobs of the same skill level or there are some examples of apparent movement upward. J.H. Friedman (or Freedman) was 21 in September, 1905 when he went from being a bill clerk at J. Wener [Weiner?] to a bookkeeper at Maunberg and Company in October. In January, 1906, he moved to Abraham Samuels as a bookkeeper at $12 a week from a job with S & W Bauman which could have been a position between Maunberg and Samuels which was not in the ledgers. In August he is listed as a bookkeeper at E. N. Schwartz and Company at $10 a week, his weekly salary reduced in his new job, but perhaps he was hopeful of better results in the future. Two young men first listed as using the YMHA service in September, 1905, are more nomadic than either Max Fisch or J. H. Freidman. Harry Greenwald, 16, has at least ten companies

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[37] The comments are taken from the Employment (Vacancies)[May 1906] for the months of February, March, April, and May, 1909.

[38] All of this information comes from the Employment Register [September 1905]. The young men's names will appear under the months of their employment.

listed in the register as having employed him in the period from September, 1905 to October, 1906. His pay was between $5 and $6 for each job, and his positions were "boy at shipping," errand boy, stock boy, porter, stock clerk, salesman, and office boy. Harry lived on West 114th Street, but his jobs took him to 66th and Broadway, Broadway below Canal, Broadway below Union Square, East 11th near 5th Avenue, Columbus near 110th, West 23rd, back to Broadway below Canal, and finally over to West 19th. Why Greenwald moved so frequently is unclear so we are left to wonder at his peripatetic job odyssey. William Prince was another nomadic job seeker. He was fourteen, living on East 83rd when he apparently left school in September, 1905 to work on 3rd Avenue near his home as an office boy. By November he has a reference from the Emmanuel Sisterhood for work as an office boy on Broome Street. In March of 1906, he is working on West 28th Street as a general assistant at $4.50 a week, possibly with another young man from the YMHA, Arnold Bauman. In April, he was apparently back at Beck and Company on Broome Street as an errand boy at $3.50 a week. in August of 1907, he is working on Reade Street as a stock boy at $5 a week, and a year later he is working at the Germania Knitting Works on Canal Street as a stock clerk for $6 a week and having paid a $2 fee to the agency for this last job. Thus in three years, Prince has had eight jobs, some of which are only referred to as references. In other words, he did not go through the agency to get some of those jobs. Again no reasons are given for the apparent frequent changes in positions. What may be a possibility is that some jobs were only temporary so that movement from job to job was a result of that or perhaps the work conditions were unpleasant. What ever the reasons for moving around, such mobility apparently was not uncommon.

The belief of the YMHA that the employment bureau, with some reservations, was "the highest form of philanthropy," was probably shared for the most part by the companies and job hopefuls who utilized the agency. The increasing number of applicants

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for positions as well as greater business acceptance of the bureau indicates presumably a satisfaction with the agency's enterprise. Thousands of young men and hundreds of women had been helped through the diligence of the YMHA bureau. Max Fisch, William Prince, and J. H. Friedman most likely would have found jobs without the help of the agency as some of the evidence implies from the YMHA registers. Yet the value of the YMHA's imprimatur of references and background checks possibly increased the worth of the applicants to employers although this was not always the consequence as we know from the evidence in the registers. Companies that continued to file job listings were presumably pleased with the YMHA applicants in most cases.

The achievements of the agency did not mask for those involved in its work the great demand for its services or the problems that the Jewish community faced with the rising number in the community that were seeking work. Levi Hershfield, the chairman of the YMHA employment committee for many years, and William Mitchell, the YMHA superintendent for a number of years, spoke of the necessity of expanding the assistance through an expanded YMHA bureau or the amalgamation of the several Jewish employment bureaus into one central agency. The implementation of the guidance program was the attempt to convince young men and their parents that education and skills were necessary for economic achievement in the future, that office boys, errand boys, and "useful boys" were ordinarily not the first steps to financial security. The job mobility was representative of both a devotion to economic improvement and the financial instability of the era. It probably formed a basis for the guidance program if job applicants were increasingly unprepared for the positions being offered. Max Fisch might be representative of all these characteristics and even a certain desperation, which might have had an ultimately fatal consequence to his health.

The publication of the Jewish Communal Register in 1918 reinforced the views of those at the YMHA. Paul Abelson recognized the extent of the problems facing the Jewish worker. Although he emphasized the industrial laborer, his insights were common to the

unskilled clerical worker. Seasonal employment, lack of training, a surplus of labor in certain occupations, and "unsatisfactory relations between employers and employees" were difficulties as frequent for YMHA job aspirants as those in the factories. Abelson's solutions were little different from those of Hershfield and Mitchell. That Judah Magnes, the head of the Kehillah, was a member of the employment committee for at least one year might indicate that the three of them had discussed the issues facing the Jewish working community. Abelson urged the "securing all salient facts bearing on the subject" and understanding their importance. More employment bureaus must be created, and more "vocational guidance and training of the Jewish boys and girls, as well as of adult immigrants," must be expanded. Only his plea for industrial peace for which there were no references in the YMHA sources differed from the earlier YMHA suggestions. Joseph Gedalecia in an article following Abelson's in the Communal Register about employment agencies in the Jewish community continued the analysis. His views, too, were not too different from those expressed by those associated with the YMHA bureau. The competition for jobs reached "abnormal proportions." This was difficult for the "efficient Jewish worker," but what of the laborer who was not so skilled and the bulk of the Jewish workers, the immigrants, the ones the YMHA said they could not help in the aftermath of the dissolution of the United Hebrew Charities agency? Gedalecia praised the accomplishments of the agencies but contended that the societies had "not fully realized their possibilities," words that Hershfield and Mitchell would have recognized. He advocated a "clearing house for employment agencies to act as a central bureau for information for applicants. . . ." This recommendation is very similar to Mitchell's endorsement of a central Jewish employment office in 1906 although Gedalecia stated that the "Employment Bureau of the Jewish Community was the pioneer in suggesting such a clearing house." The objects of this society would be the collection of data on available positions "in each industry in which Jews mostly engage" and "an efficient method of dealing with the applicants so that they will be referred to the proper agencies and proper

jobs." The recommendations of the YMHA agency were similar with the exception of nonsectarianism.[39]

The YMHA bureau was very much in the mainstream of thinking about the problems facing the Jewish worker and the means to attack those troubles. If Max Fisch and Harry Greenwald had difficulty, for whatever reasons, of securing steady employment, this does not entirely negate the vision that the YMHA (and other Jewish communal institutions) implemented of providing a service to improve the lives of those in the community. That it was "one of the highest orders of charity" and "the highest type of philanthropic effort" does not exaggerate the contributions of the YMHA agency to advance the quality of the community's life.

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Historical Overview of Black Independent or Black-Controlled Schools

The numbers of black independent or black-controlled schools have increased significantly since 1970. David Ruenzel states that in 1970 there were only a few such schools. However, in 1988, there were 211 black independent or black-controlled schools; today over 400 are located mostly in urban neighborhoods (Ruenzel, 18). As we will discuss in detail in other parts of our ethnographic study, there are numerous reasons why this has occurred including dissatisfaction with the public schools, desire for greater discipline and academic challenges, and interest in inculcating particular values and attitudes. Yet these schools are not new or innovative in the African-American experience. Rather they are an integral part of the black heritage in the United States with antecedents as far back as the pre-Revolutionary War era.

Most education for slaves prior to the Revolution came from their masters. Although many states had laws forbidding this, some masters defied the law. Until emancipation in 1865, this would be the main way that slaves were educated. For free blacks living both in the North and the South, the situation was very different. They usually had no access to what schools existed at that time or, if they did, they were harassed by the white students. Such conditions led African-Americans to establish their own schools. In 1798 Prince Hall, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, organized a school for African-American students in his son's home in Boston after the city refused the requests of the 'Africans' (as they were then called) for a separate, tax-supported school (Ratteray, 138). Other such schools were established in other parts of New England as well. In 1807, two mutual aid societies in Newport, Rhode Island, the African Union society and the African Benevolent Society merged and created a free school (Meier and Rudwick, 99). In Philadelphia the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church founded the Society of Free People of Color for Promoting the Instruction of Children of African Descent. A school for orphans was created under the auspices of the New York Society of Free People of Color in 1812 (*Ibid.*, 110).

One of the major factors in the founding of these schools was the intense resistance of whites to the integration of the public schools. State legislatures and constitutional conventions in the North and especially the Midwest enacted school segregation into law as well as practice. Despite the integration of public schools in Rochester under the leadership of Frederick Douglass and in Boston under the prodding of local African-American citizens and the abolitionist Charles Sumner in the 1850's, two examples of northern opposition will exemplify the intensity of white antipathy to integration. At the newly established Noyes Academy in Canaan, New Hampshire, all applicants, regardless of race or color were admitted to the school which had several abolitionists on its board. Among the students who enrolled were future black leaders Henry H. Garnet and Alexander Crummell. Opened in March, 1835, the school building was torn down in August of the same year by a crowd of towns people who worried that their town would be overrun with fugitive slaves and paupers. Crummell later wrote, "Fourteen black boys with books in their hands set the entire Granite State crazy" (Litwack, 117-120). An earlier incident confirmed the white animus and the lengths to which white citizens would go to stop integration. Prudence Crandall had started a boarding school for girls in Canterbury, Connecticut. When she admitted a black student, the majority of white parents withdrew their daughters. Crandall, with the support of the most prominent black and white abolitionists, decided to make the school "a High School for young colored Ladies and Misses" as the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* described it. The reaction of the people of Canterbury was swift and predictable. All the usual canards about black inferiority and race miscegenation were brought forth. When Crandall refused to heed the demands of the town that she give up her school (which had students from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Providence), the town pursued more direct action. Stores refused to sell goods to the school, the local doctor refused to treat students, and manure was thrown into the school's well, forcing Crandall to bring water from her father's farm two miles away. The state legislature passed a law prohibiting the education of "colored

persons who are not inhabitants of this state." Crandall, after two trials, was convicted of violating the law; her school was closed. Ironically, in 1838, four years after the closing of Crandall's school, the state legislature repealed the law (*Ibid.*, 126-131).

Despite this widespread animosity, African-Americans were able in some places to acquire financial support for separate public schools. African-Americans in Hartford received a new building for their children's education, and the abolitionist Charles Ray in New York City formed a Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Citizens which was able to convince city authorities in 1857 to renovate one building and construct another for African-American students (Meier and Rudwick, 113). Yet these schools were often funded poorly, and many black leaders resented the implied inferiority in segregated schools. A black magazine in 1837 denounced separate schools which "so shackled the intellect of colored youth, that an education acquired under such circumstances, was, comparatively, of little advantage" (Litwack, 132-137). The issue of segregated versus integrated education was a prominent one within the African-American community. Advocates of integration argued that their view would dispel white stereotypes of African-Americans and contribute to racial harmony. Proponents of the segregated schools invoked the cultivation of " independence and manliness" as reasons that their ideas were better for blacks (Gatewood, 249-250).

If blacks faced considerable difficulty in the antebellum North educating their children, the problems were magnified appreciably in the South. Efforts to organize integrated schools in the late 1700's and early 1800's by Quakers and other abolitionist groups were rarely successful for financial reasons as well as the growing southern fear of servile revolt in the aftermath of the Haitian revolution. As in the North blacks established their own schools as an African-American newspaper declared in 1805 for a commitment to "the improvement and happiness of the present and future generations" (Berlin, 74-76). In Charleston, the local mulatto elite through the Brown Fellowship Society provided an education for black children. The Society also funded the Minor Society to educate

orphaned and indigent black children in the city. The Roman Catholic Church in New Orleans also educated some blacks (After the Civil War, both the Epsicopal Church and Roman Catholic Church had parochial schools in southern and northern cities that catered to black students. See Gatewood, 257-258). In Washington, D. C., three illiterate African-Americans established a school they constructed and employed a white teacher in 1807 (Meier and Rudwick, 111). In many southern areas where white opposition to black education was pervasive, African-Americans established schools that met surreptitiously (Berlin, 173-174, 305-306). The desire for education on the part of blacks was eloquently expressed in 1838 when a group of free Virginia blacks petitioned the legislature to organize a school: "So general has become the diffusion of knowledge that those persons who are so unfortunate as not to be in some degree educated are cut off from the ordinary means of self-advancement & find the greatest difficulty in gaining an honest livelihood." A black schoolmaster in Baltimore described a "good education" as the *sine qua non* as regards the elevation of our people" (*Ibid.*, 303-304). The black church played a key role in promoting the education of African-American children in the South. One of the best examples of the church encouragement of education was in Baltimore. By 1860, the Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches had organized high schools with four year courses of study; the fifteen African schools in Baltimore that year enrolled 2600 students (*Ibid.*, 304-305).

Southern white opposition was as great to these schools as it was in the North. In 1823 Mississippi passed a law forbidding groups of blacks greater than five from studying together. In 1834 Charleston required that a white person attend each class meeting (Meier and Rudwick, 111). A free black who was respected in Richmond established a school for blacks and hired a white teacher. The city forbade the operation of the school in 1811 and sent the founder to an insane asylum, partially because he had some religious delusions, but more for his temerity in starting a school for black children (Berlin, 76-78). Despite such opposition blacks persisted in operating these schools. No historian or

contemporary commentator contends, however, that many African-American children were educated in these schools. That would come after emancipation and the Civil War.

During the Civil War and Reconstruction, black freedmen's aid societies, usually sponsored by black churches, established schools for runaway slaves as did white organizations such as the American Missionary Association (AMA), an arm of the Congregational church. With the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1864, the Union military worked with white organizations such as the AMA (which did send some northern free black teachers south) to establish schools, especially in New Orleans. The enthusiasm of the freedmen for schooling was manifest. In Georgia in 1866, "there were ninety-six schools supported in whole or in part by the freedmen, who owned fifty-seven of the buildings" (Meier and Rudwick, 174-176). In 1868 freedmen sustained in part or wholly 1325 of the 1831 day and night schools under the supervision of the Freedmen's Bureau, and they owned 518 of the buildings (Meier, 12). Under the Republican Reconstruction programs in the years 1868-1877, the southern states provided for universal public education, but school segregation was the rule rather than the exception and the return of the southern Democrats to power would lead over the years to the legal implementation of Jim Crow which would be fully institutionalized by the beginning of the twentieth century (Meier and Rudwick, 176-177). The *Plessy* decision in 1896 only confirmed what already existed, both North and South.

Since the black public schools of the South had so little money, the missionary schools established during the Civil War and Reconstruction assumed an important function in educating African-Americans. They concentrated on elementary and normal school (teacher training) as most important for the future of the blacks. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, these schools provided most of the black teachers because public schools were so defective. Public schools would assume greater importance for African-Americans in the twentieth century, but under segregation blacks rarely controlled the finances or the policy-making for the schools which were woefully inadequate. Only when

school segregation appeared threatened in the late 1940's and early 1950's did southern legislatures begin to take actions to improve dramatically the quality of southern black education in hopes of avoiding a court-imposed integration. Even in such circumstances, black and white educators were somewhat successful in teaching black children. In 1860, only 5% of the freed population was literate; in 1910, 70 % of the black population was literate. Yet by 1912 the differentials in length of school year for black and white students, the substantial difference in the amount of money spent on black and white schools, the pathetic quality of black school structures compared to those for whites, and the lack of schools for blacks in some rural areas (where students had to have eight years of schooling to go to high school, but blacks could only go for seven years so there was no need for a black high school) were indications that black education was not a significant priority for white leaders. Thus education became one of the factors in the Great Migration of African-Americans to the North in the years 1900-1940. The *Chicago Defender*, one of the leading black newspapers, declared in 1921 that "[n]o high schools, no protection for life, and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan" were major reasons for blacks leaving the South (Marks, 75-78). Although northern schools were usually segregated, they were often better than what the blacks had had in the South, and night school was available to working people. In some northern night schools, African-American literature and history was taught, a circumstance that if it occurred in the South was unknown to the whites monitoring the schools (Grossman, 246-248; Alferdteen Harrison in her book on the Piney Woods boarding school for blacks in Mississippi says that the school founded in 1909 under the principles of Booker T. Washington still had no black history or black culture programs in the middle 1970's. See Harrison, 134-135. See also John Dollard, *Cast and Class in a Southern Town*, for excellent analysis of southern public education for blacks and black attitudes about schooling in one Mississippi town in the 1930's).

Four interesting developments relating to black independent and black-controlled schools that bear directly on our discussion took place during the postwar era of

segregation. One of these is discussed in an article that Civil War historian James McPherson wrote on black education from 1865 to 1915. This involved disputes between the white missionary groups who ran many of the black schools and colleges in the South and their African-American constituency. The major dispute centered on the dearth of black teachers in these schools. Many African-Americans argued there should be more black teachers "to fill our people with race pride . . . [and] shape and control Negro thought." The black community was not unified on this issue, but many of the American Missionary Association and the Home Mission Society of the Baptist Church schools slowly added more black teachers. In 1905, 53% of the teachers in AMA secondary schools were black, and seven of the twenty-one principals were African-American. In 1915, half of teachers in the Home Mission Society schools were African-American (McPherson, 1357-1379). Another development was the publication of scholarly works on the history of African-Americans in the United States. George Washington Williams wrote the first, *History of the Negro Race in America* in 1883. Race pride more than arguments for integration was emphasized in such works, especially the popular work for secondary schools, *School History of the Negro Race in America*, where author E. A. Johnson, a Raleigh, North Carolina, school principal declared, "It must . . . be a stimulus to any people to be able to refer to their ancestors as distinguished in deeds of valor. . . ." How much such works were used with secondary students is unknown, but 'The New Negro' movement of the early twentieth century clearly emphasized race self-esteem and a knowledge of the African-American past (Meier, 52-53, 259).

The last two developments concern particular schools that African-Americans developed during the period of segregation. The first of these were black boarding schools established in the South. At one time there were at least 83 such schools, mostly located in the South. Again religious denominations, some white, were instrumental in their organization, but many were founded under the auspices of Booker T. Washington. Many of these institutions received support from northern and southern white philanthropic

organizations. These schools in their heyday educated a number of prominent black leaders. With the *Brown* decision in 1954, many of these schools began to fold. Only four are left in the South and two northern boarding schools for blacks, founded in 1946 and 1979, are the other two. The most prominent of the schools is Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi with four hundred students and a waiting list. Most of the others are like Laurinburg Institute in North Carolina which was built on land purchased by local sharecroppers who also helped construct the school buildings, but today is strapped by back taxes, neglected facilities, and low student enrollment although 80% of the 1993 seniors at Laurinburg went to college (Lindsay; Applebome). The other school type that developed was the Sister Clara Muhammed Schools. The history of these schools and their programs will be explained in another portion of our study devoted to Islamic and Afro-centric schools (Rashid, 1992; Ruenzel).

The most significant educational issue within the African-American community after Reconstruction was the debate whether liberal arts or industrial education should be emphasized. The two major protagonists were W.E.B. Du Bois, supporter of the 'Talented Tenth' of classically educated blacks who were to lead the race, and Booker T. Washington, a freedmen who argued that manual or vocational training would benefit African-Americans more than the study of foreign languages or Greek civilization. The controversy divided the African-American community. Some black leaders thought that insisting on one curriculum as suitable for all blacks was silly, but the issue was a major point of contention within the African-American community (Gatewood, 266-267; Meier, 190-247). Other African-American educators like Carter G. Woodson in *The Mis-Education of the Negro* argued that the education of blacks in traditional white systems as well as at black colleges had failed to help African-Americans. He contended that a revamping of black education was needed to start where the blacks are and teach them to think and do for themselves (Woodson).

Support for integrated schools, however, was the dominant position within the black community by the late 1940's and early 1950's as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People challenged the Jim Crow laws of education in the South. Yet, for many African-Americans the desegregation decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown* did not bring better educational opportunities. As Joan Ratteray and David Ruenzel have pointed out, black parents began to be concerned about the loss of control of community schools to an unresponsive educational elite, the lack of discipline in public schools, the continual prejudice that black students faced in public schools from both teachers and students, and poor facilities (see especially Jonathan Kozol's two books, *Death At An Early Age* and *Savage Inequalities* and Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here*) as well as overcrowding, lack of individual attention, failure to affirm religious and racial traditions, safety and the lack of values in the public schools. Rather than sacrifice their children in uncertain and potentially dangerous situations, parents as well as local institutions in the African-American community began to organize independent schools. Again, churches were a significant factor in the growth of black independent and black-controlled schools that were discussed at the beginning of this essay, and I haven't emphasized the considerable contributions to black education of the Roman Catholic Church, many of whose schools in inner-city areas began educating African-Americans when white populations began to leave urban neighborhoods (see Polite). Thus a tradition of self-help has continued within the African-American community. When blacks found schooling inadequate or unavailable in the antebellum and Jim Crow eras, they organized educational institutions to meet their needs and those of their children. The failure of integrated education has led them to again establish schools that will uphold their values and goals (Ratteray; Ruenzel).

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Anderson, James B. The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935. Chapel Hill, 1988.

This is a comprehensive account of black education in the South in a time of turmoil and increasing Jim Crow segregation. Anderson's major thesis is that white philanthropic groups aided black education to socialize the black elite and black workers into a status of subordination to white dominance in southern society.

Applebome, Peter. "Boarding Schools for Blacks Are Having a Resurgence in Popularity." *New York Times*, September 21, 1994, B12.

This article details the efforts of black educators to maintain the few remaining black boarding schools. It gives a very brief general history of the schools and why current black educators find them important.

Berlin, Ira. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974).

In this comprehensive study of the status of free blacks in the antebellum South, Berlin devotes several pages to an examination of the schools that free blacks established in spite of considerable white opposition. There are excellent footnotes for anyone who wishes to pursue an in-depth study of black education in the antebellum South.

Dollard, John, *Caste And Class In A Southern Town* (Madison, 1988). Reprint of 1937 edition.

In his examination of a small Mississippi city in the 1930's, Dollard has one chapter on the education of African-Americans. His analysis shows both the great desire of the black population for education and the obstacles that they faced in trying to educate their children under the system of Jim Crow.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988).

The Columbia professor's monumental and highly praised study of Reconstruction is readable and informative. The index lists numerous references to education in the South during this period, and Professor Foner's citations are comprehensive. This is a good place to start with black education during this time period.

Gatewood, Willard B. *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington, 1993.

In a comprehensive study of upper class African-Americans in the aftermath of emancipation, Gatewood has one chapter on the education of the children of these black leaders. He shows that some of the issues that are important in black education today were as significant in those years. His research is very detailed.

Grossman, James R. *Land Of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago, 1989)

A very readable study of Chicago and the blacks migrating to it in the early twentieth century, *Land Of Hope* has a whole chapter examining education, blacks, and the schools of Chicago. Grossman makes a strong point that education opportunity was a major factor in the African-American migration.

Harrison, Alferdteen. Piney Woods School: An Oral History. Jackson, 1982

This is a brief history of one of the oldest black boarding schools founded in the early 20th century in Mississippi by a disciple of Booker T. Washington. It is the chronicle of how a single individual can make a significant difference. Harrison points out how the school expanded from industrial education to college prep education.

Kluger, Richard. Simple Justice: The History of Brown versus the Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality. New York: Knopf, 1976.

This is the story of the *Brown* decision. Comprehensive and recently made into a PBS movie, *Simple Justice* as well depicts the conditions of segregated schools in the South.

Kotlowitz, Alex. There Are No Children Here. New York : Anchor Books, 1992.

Expanded from an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, this book is the story of two black brothers and their family as they try to survive some of the harshest living conditions in the United States, the public housing projects in Chicago. Although it is another heartrending book in the mold of Kozol's work, there is very slight reason for some optimism at the end of the work as the two brothers are enrolled in a private school for blacks.

Kozol, Jonathan. Death At An Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1967.

Black children, bad schools, bad teaching, and Boston, the center of American independence, becomes the nadir of education for young African-Americans. This is a heartbreaking book.

Lindsay, David, "Focus On The Future," *Teacher Magazine* (August, 1994) 10-12

This article relates the history of Laurinburg Institute in North Carolina and its current struggles to remain viable. The article is clear summary of some of the problems facing black boarding schools today.

Litwack, Leon. *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961).

Litwack's work is considered one of the most important studies of free blacks in the North prior to the Civil War. Comprehensive and readable, *North of Slavery* has a whole chapter on the education of free blacks in the antebellum North.

McPherson, James. "White Liberals and Black Power in Negro Education, 1865-1915." *American Historical Review* (June, 1970) volume 75, 1357-1379.

This article details the tension between black and white educators over the control of the missionary schools that were established in the South to educate the freedmen. Written at the time of the Black Power movement, the article makes clear that issues about black and white teachers and administrators at black schools were not a new concern.

Meier, August. *Negro Thought In America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, 1966)

A seminal study of African-American ideology, *Negro Thought* concentrates mostly on black higher education, but it has some important points about black elementary and secondary education in the age of Booker T. Washington.

Meier, August and Elliot Rudwick. *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 3rd edition (New York, 1976).

This is a standard survey of African-American history. There is useful information on black education throughout African-American education although the emphasis is on the years prior to *Brown*.

Marks, Carole. *Farewell-- We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington, 1989).

This is a somewhat dry study of the Great Migration, but her information on the black educational experience in the Jim Crow South of the early twentieth century is succinct and informative.

Polite, Vernon C. "Getting the Job Done Well: African American Students and Catholic Schools." *Journal of Negro Education*, (1992) Volume 61, no. 2, 211-222.

This article reviews the history of Catholic schools in relation to the education of African-American students in urban schools. Severite High School in Detroit and the Brooklyn Diocese Project are described.

Rashid, Hakim M. "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America." *Journal of Negro Education* (1992) Volume 61, no. 2, 178-185.

This article describes the history of the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools from their start in the 1930's as the University of Islam. In the 1960's the number of schools increased. They focused on Black Nationalism at that time. In the late 1970's the schools became known as Sister Clara Muhammad Schools and began following orthodox Al-Islam as their basic philosophy.

Rattery, Joan Davis. "Independent Neighborhood Schools: A Framework for the Education of African Americans." *Journal of Negro Education* (1992) Volume 61, no. 2, 138-147.

This review of black independent neighborhood schools gives a brief history of black schools, where they get their financial support, why parents choose them, parental demographic information, standardized test information and an evaluation of the success of black independent schools.

Ruenzel, David, "Black Flight," *Teacher Magazine* (August, 1994) 18-23

Ruenzel reports on four black independent schools in the Atlanta area. Three of them are religiously oriented while the fourth is a progressive school. This is a very readable article with some solid information on why black parents are increasingly choosing black independent schools.

Woodson, Carter G. The Mis-Education of the Negro. Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1977.

Woodson reviews the history of Negro education through the early 1930's. The book was originally published in 1933. Woodson claims the education supplied Negroes historically did not meet their needs for practical education. Those educated in the traditional white system learned to despise fellow Negroes because they became indoctrinated to white values by their education. Even Negro colleges fail the Negroes. Woodson argues education for Negroes needs to be revamped. It needs to start where the Negroes are and teach them to think and do for themselves.